the weekly Standard

FEBRUARY 9, 2009 $4.95

JOHN UPDIKE, 1932-2009
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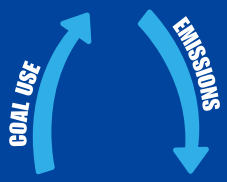

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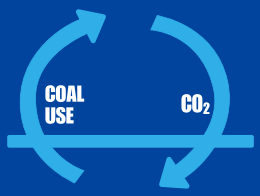

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CLEAN COAL: AMERICA'S ENERGY FUTURE

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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Updike on LBJ Derangement Syndrome

Elsewhere in this issue, Christopher Caldwell pays fine tribute to the "writerly power" of the late novelist John Updike, the attribute for which he will chiefly and justly be remembered. The Scrapbook would like to put in a word as well, though, for Updike's honorable behavior as a public man during the Vietnam war, which distinguished him then and now from so many of his peers, and which has been neglected in the obituaries.

Exhibit A was Updike's reaction to a June 1965 "White House Festival of the Arts," which the invited intellectuals decided was an occasion for them to stamp their feet over LBJ's Vietnam policy in the president's own drawing room, as it were. As Joseph Bottum recounted in these pages a few years back:

> Readings [were planned] from Saul Bellow and John Hersey, the poets Robert Lowell and Phyllis McGinley, and the popular biographer Catherine Drinker Bowen. But when, two weeks before the festival, Lowell announced his refusal to attend in order to mark his opposition to war in Vietnam, the literary world exploded. Philip Roth, William Styron, Alan Dugan, and Stanley Kunitz signed a letter supporting him. John Updike chastised Lowell's ill behavior in making a public spectacle of his refusal, although Updike reserved his deepest scorn for Dwight Macdonald, who hadn't refused an invitation. Instead Macdonald went to the White House deliberately dressed down in a plaid shirt and tennis shoes, spent the day trying to collect signatures for a petition denouncing the Johnson administration, and then wrote about the whole thing as a journalist for the *New York Review of Books*—the perfect trifecta of bad manners.

Exhibit B would be the letter to the editor from Updike, published in the *New York Times* on September 24, 1967, "Writers' Opinions on Vietnam." An article a week earlier about the book *Authors Take Sides on Vietnam* had characterized Updike (along with the English writers Kingsley Amis, Robert Conquest, Rupert Croft-Cooke, Roy Harrod, and Auberon Waugh) as the only scribes among the 259 included in the volume to be "unequivocally for" the war.

Updike was hardly for the war, and after spelling out his many equivocations, he memorably dissented from what might be termed LBJ Derangement Syndrome, precursor to the Bush Derangement Syndrome of more recent vintage. "I differ, perhaps, from my unanimously dove-ish confrères," he wrote,

> in crediting the Johnson Administration with good faith and some good sense. Anyone not a rigorous pacifist must at least consider the argument that this war, evil as it is, is the lesser of available evils, intended to forestall worse wars. I am not sure that this is true, but I assume that this is the reasoning of those who prosecute it, rather than the maintenance of business prosperity or the President's crazed stubbornness.
>
> I feel in the dove arguments as presented to me too much esthetic distaste for the President; . . . even the best of the negative accounts of our operations in South Vietnam, such as Mary McCarthy's vivid reports or Jonathan Schell's account of the destruction of Ben Suc, [place] too much reliance upon satirical descriptions of American officers and the grotesqueries of cultural superimposition.
>
> The protest seems too reflexive, too pop; I find the statements, printed with mine, of Jules Pfeiffer and Norman Mailer, frivolous. Like W.H. Auden, I would hope, the sooner the better, for a "negotiated peace, to which the Vietcong will have to be a party," and like him feel that it is foolish to canvass writers upon political issues. Not only do our views, as he says, "have no more authority than those of any reasonably well-educated citizen," but in my own case at least I feel my professional need for freedom of speech and expression prejudices me toward a government whose constitution guarantees it. ♦

FDR TV

It began last September, when CBS's Katie Couric sat down to talk with vice presidential candidate Joseph Biden about the economy. As usual, Biden was emphatic: Today's leaders (translation: George W. Bush) should take their cue from Franklin Roosevelt when responding to financial crisis.

"When the stock market crashed," Biden told Katie, "Franklin D. Roosevelt got on the television and didn't just talk about the, you know, the princes of greed. He said, 'Look, here's what happened.'"

At the time, The Scrapbook was nonplussed. Surely, we reasoned, Katie will take a moment to correct a confused Senator Biden—and the footage will become viral video as the nation laughs at another Biden goof.

But that didn't happen. As we now know, of course, Katie was preparing for her armed confrontation with Sarah Palin, and didn't have time to set Biden straight. For we're certain that Katie knows that Franklin Roosevelt wasn't president when the stock market crashed in 1929—Herbert Hoover was in the White House—and that Roosevelt never "got on television" to give America some straight talk about the economy because there was no television (as we know it today) during his 12-year presidency.

Then, it happened again. A few weeks ago a *New Yorker* writer named George Packer lamented that President Bush never "explained to the public what

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was really going on [in Iraq], no euphemisms, no cheerleading, just get on TV regularly, maybe with a map like FDR during World War II, and level with the American people."

Once again, THE SCRAPBOOK's memory was jogged: Remember when everybody in the neighborhood would gather round the old DuMont in the living room of the Packer house—their first set, the one with the big plastic knobs and antenna—and watch FDR remove his pince-nez and take out his pointer, and show us where the troops had landed on Omaha Beach or describe the Battle of Guadalcanal?

Of course not. Franklin Roosevelt never appeared on television as president, or at any other time, and he never gave a speech "with a map"—although once, in a radio address during World War II, he did give listeners a moment to "get out your maps" as he described the global situation. While THE SCRAPBOOK doesn't expect Biden or Packer—or, perhaps especially, Katie Couric—to have a sophisticated knowledge of history, we do believe they should get their facts straight before trashing George W. Bush with invented memories about FDR the TV Star. ♦

Snow Business

Every new president takes office pledging a new, improved relationship with Washington, D.C.—the city, not the political culture—and Barack Obama is no exception. His pledge, in particular, has been especially welcome, since he won 94 percent of the vote in the District of Columbia last November.

But then came Washington's first ice/snowstorm of the season last week, and the closing of local schools for a day. This is a perennial debate in the nation's capital, where many transplanted Northerners and Midwesterners believe Washingtonians are needlessly spooked by the sight of snowflakes. Somewhat to THE SCRAPBOOK's surprise, President Obama counts himself among them.

"My children's school was canceled today," he sarcastically carped to reporters, "because of what—some ice?" Warming to the subject, so to speak, he added: "We're going to have to apply some flinty Chicago toughness to this town."

This unexpected snark from the occupant of the White House did not go down well with the locals. As some were quick to point out, icy streets are a peril for school buses. And as others more pointedly pointed out, Malia and Sasha don't trudge through the drifts to the private Sidwell Friends School, nor does the first lady strap them into the family station wagon and brave the elements. They are escorted by a block-long entourage of SUVs, motorcycle cops, glowering security agents—and snowplows, if necessary.

Better yet, from THE SCRAPBOOK's standpoint, Sidwell's associate headmaster, Ellis Turner, matched the president's sarcasm with his own: "No question, the president is right," he admitted in an email message to the *Washington Post*. "The next time it snows, we would like to invite him to help us make the decision. His involvement will make it much easier to explain to our students why they won't be able to spend the day sleeping and sledding."

Then came the *coup de grâce*, invoking Obama's alma mater in the bright blue Pacific: "Or, I suppose Sidwell Friends could merge with Punahou, move our classrooms to Hawaii, and never worry about the weather again."

Undoubtedly, Turner is even now being "interviewed" at Secret Service headquarters. ♦

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Casual

Fortress Washington

In 1975, I moved back to Washington after several years away and started working as a freelance editor from home. It was lonely work, and sometimes I'd go stir crazy.

On those days, I'd pack up my pencils and manuscript, bundle my three-year-old and my one-year-old into their twin stroller, and set off with great concentration over the uneven brick sidewalks of Capitol Hill to drop the kids at their sitters'. Unburdened, I'd almost run the length of East Capitol Street to the Library of Congress and a desk under its soaring dome.

Back then, anyone off the street could walk in and use the books; maybe you had to be 18. It thrilled me that that majestic place was mine. And not only mine. In among the serious scholars I recognized a few characters from the neighborhood. I recall one regular, a frail black man in a long navy coat who used to read books about carpentry. The hush, the cool, the solidity of the place, the Gutenberg Bible in its glass case out in the foyer near the great marble staircase—they belonged to us.

The Library of Congress is directly across East Capitol Street from the white marble temple of the Supreme Court, and facing both across First Street—in a layout familiar to all who studied the arrangements for the inauguration of President Obama—is the Capitol itself. Just as the library used to be my work annex, these mighty public buildings were our neighborhood landmarks and the destination of our walks. The stone rims of the ornamental pools in front of the Supreme Court are just the right height for a toddler to lean against, the better to splash small hands, and sometimes the guards were willing to look the other way. On the Capitol grounds, inside a grove of yews, the kids had a secret place.

Our favorite, though, was not the east side of the Capitol—where 32 years ago we joined the crowd to watch Jimmy Carter's swearing in, the kids in their stroller, me straining to hear—but the broad stone terrace on the west side, with its sweeping view down the Mall all the way to Virginia. This is where presidents have taken the oath of office ever since Ronald Reagan, with his dramatic flair, shifted the ceremony here in 1981. It's where we used to brave the crowds on the Fourth of July to watch the fireworks. Usually, though, on ordinary days and fondly remembered warm summer nights, just a handful of casual visitors, including joggers and dog walkers, would have the terrace to ourselves.

DARREN GYGI

I don't suppose we'll ever go back there. The terrace and much of the Capitol grounds were closed to the public shortly after 9/11. Around the same time work began on a new visitors' center. Between them, construction and security kept the Capitol walled off from its neighbors lo these seven years.

But now the work is done. At long last, the barricades have come down, and even the special platforms and barriers for the recent inauguration have mostly been dismantled and stored away. I walked over the other afternoon to see what it's like to have our Capitol back.

Of course it's not the same. The yews and many of the beautiful old trees are gone. New trees have been planted beside the immense ramps and stairways that now dominate the east grounds, leading down to the subterranean visitors' center. But far from shading the Capitol lawn, the new trees are mostly below ground level. The ramps are walled with dark gray stone. The whole has the feel of a fortress.

I walked down. The visitors' center had just closed for the day, but through the glass doors I could see a phalanx of metal detectors inside and guards milling about. I walked back up.

No one stopped me from approaching the Capitol building, but a guard at the bottom of the central stairway leading to the old main entrance confirmed that that door—which we used to use impromptu, to the envy and amazement of foreign visitors—is now closed to the public. Needless to say, the west terrace, with the view, is off limits for good.

There are reasons for all this. I remember when a Capitol guard was shot and killed by a deranged man back even before 9/11. I realize ordinary people can still use the Library of Congress if they just obtain the proper photo ID and wait in line to pass through security. Like everyone else, I submit to all this quietly, but not without a pang for the openness we used to prize.

Claudia Anderson

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Memorializing Flight 93

I was one of the estimated 130,000 people who visited the Flight 93 crash site last year ("The Fight Over Flight 93," January 19). On a beautiful July 4 weekend, the small gravel parking lot was more than accommodating for the crowd. The makeshift memorial of personal tributes there at the time—staffed by volunteers with personal stories of the crash and under the custodial oversight of Park Service rangers—was a heartfelt and genuine tribute to the passengers and crew who took to the air on September 11, 2001, with no inkling they would soon be pressed into heroic service.

There is no need for the government to undertake a sprawling multimillion-dollar memorial on the order of the Taj Mahal at the site, and there is no reason to trample constitutional protections of property rights to do so.

David W. Almasi
Alexandria, Va.

President Bush's Legacy

I enjoyed Fred Barnes's editorial on "Bush's Achievements" (January 19); however, I think he missed the most important one. George W. Bush was the first U.S. president to acknowledge that terrorism was an actual war and not a law enforcement problem. That set the tone for his entire two terms. If or when Obama changes that policy and we are attacked again, it will be most interesting to see if he sees it as a military issue or a law enforcement issue.

Carl J. Iannacone
North Little Rock, Ark.

Fred Barnes got it just about right in his column about the achievements of the Bush presidency. I think he missed a couple, though, and I would expand on one he mentioned.

The president deserves world acclaim for committing the United States to the eradication of HIV-AIDS in Africa. Eyebrows shot up early in his presidency when he announced the United States would commit $15 billion to treat and prevent the disease. George W. Bush, a white Republican, is the first world leader to take such a step on behalf of black Africa. A singular event!

The president also deserves recognition for his decision to bar funding of fetal stem-cell research. Creating life just to destroy it is wrong and the president spoke with clarity on this subject while faced with widespread derision. How wonderful to learn, years later, that the president was correct on scientific, as well as moral, grounds when doctors announced there was an alternate method of conducting the same research that did not involve fetal stem cells.

Finally, as for his conduct of the war on terror, the nation needs to remember how personally President Bush regarded the loss of the men and women he sent to Iraq and Afghanistan. He wrote a letter to each family that lost someone and, without any publicity, he spent hours and hours trying to console the families whose loved ones died in the war.

Jack Lavelle
Phoenix, Ariz.

Incentivize Growth

Thank you for Matthew Continetti's provocative article on economic policy ("The Stimulus Trap," January 19). Unfortunately, Continetti missed the most important point: Any fiscal stimulus plan is bound to fail because it targets the wrong thing—money. Most fiscal stimulus plans succeed only in sloshing money from one sector of the economy to another, and are not very efficient at that. They are not designed to change incentives to build and invest, activities that actually create value needed to improve the economy.

Because incentives are the key, the doubling in capital gains and dividends tax rates (slated to occur in January 2011) will be much more important than any stimulus package. These pending tax increases will strongly discourage current long-term investments, which cannot pay off until after the tax increases arrive. These increases will also encourage short-term selling in 2010 to beat the increases before they take effect. If combined with a round of destructive regulations (*à la* Sarbanes-Oxley), the results will not be pretty.

Joseph G. Cosby
Falls Church, Va.

Fairness in Football

After Utah's second dominating BCS appearance in five years, we Utah fans are no longer grateful to be the poster boy of the system's generosity ("Obama & the BCS," January 26). Since when was the national championship a right for some Division I schools and a privilege for others? The BCS may be more exciting and an improvement from what we had before, but it is still archaic for where the sport is now and where it is going. Programs like Utah and Boise State are popping up everywhere with the ability to beat storied programs. We need a system that allows for that debate to take place on the field and encourages schools all over the nation to build competitive programs. I don't see how a system that discourages free market competition is good for the long-term health of the sport.

Spencer Hall
Salt Lake City, Utah

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the weekly Standard

The Right Stimulus

The economy is in recession. There's no end in sight. The number of unemployed continues to rise. Equities markets are in the dumps. The real estate sector hasn't hit bottom. The banks are drowning in a sludge of toxic assets. Excuse us while we break out the Prozac.

Washington's response? Pathetic. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi let her appropriators out of their cages and had them draft the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. This is the economic stimulus package that everyone has been waiting for. And it's a clunker. The more you learn about the economic stimulus plan, the less you like it. Charles Krauthammer called it the "worst bill in galactic history." This is only a slight exaggeration.

What the Democrats have done is write down every single item on their liberal wish list, append dollar amounts next to the items seemingly at random, and call it "stimulus." The president wanted the bill to be free of pet projects and include business tax cuts. But no one told Pelosi's appropriators. They are using the current troubles to push through a decades-old domestic policy agenda. The spending—$50 million for the National Endowment for the Arts, $400 million for global warming studies—demonstrates that the bill has no overarching logic.

Which makes it a major disappointment. Almost everybody agrees that the economy is a mess and that fiscal policy might help tidy things up. But $6.2 billion for "home weatherization"?

The problem with the House plan is that it is ineffective *even on Keynesian grounds*. Keynes said that, once monetary policy has reached its limit, fiscal policy must take priority. In other words, when interest rates have effectively reached zero, governments must lower taxes and increase spending to rebalance the economy. But the House bill is half-baked Keynes. And it will fail.

It will fail because it is imperfectly designed. A well-designed stimulus meets three criteria. It's large. It's fast. You like what you get out of it. But the Democratic plan is none of these. When you look closely at the House bill, you realize that it's not so big after all. Nor will the money be spent quickly. And the things we get out of it? Small fry.

"Hello, son. I suppose chicken farming doesn't seem so bad now."

THE NEW YORKER COLLECTION 2009 / FRANK COTHAM

The Congressional Budget Office projects that the House bill will cost $816 billion. Of that, $248 billion is in aid to states for Medicare and Medicaid, unemployment insurance, and so on. Another $212 billion is in tax cuts. This leaves $356 billion in discretionary spending.

It's hard to argue that the $248 billion in transfers to the states will stimulate the economy. The money is being taken from one pot and put in another so that the states can balance their books and ensure the proper treatment of beneficiaries. It doesn't prime the pump. It just keeps the pump from falling apart.

Then there are the tax cuts. The bulk of them go to the "Making Work Pay" refundable payroll tax credit of $500 per worker. It's unclear whether the credit will be reflected immediately in your paycheck. The government may send out checks as it did in 2001 and 2008. But a change in withholding would be preferable. It wouldn't take long to implement. The taxpayers would have the money quickly. *Voilà!* An instant raise.

Except that the raise will be peanuts. You'll hardly notice it. If you do, experience suggests that you prob-

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ably won't spend it. Washington has cut taxes in this manner twice in the last decade. Both times, taxpayers saved the money or used it to pay down personal debt. There was hardly any stimulating effect. The refund doesn't seem to have worked then. Why would another work now?

That leaves the roughly $356 billion in discretionary spending. But not all of it will be spent quickly. The CBO estimates that only $29 billion will be spent by the end of fiscal year 2009. About $116 billion will be spent in fiscal year 2010. This gives us a total of $145 billion in infrastructure and other spending over the next fiscal year and a half. Too little, too late. And therefore unlikely to have much of an impact.

Republicans, then, had every reason to vote against the stimulus bill. And so they did. Unanimously. But that doesn't mean their alternative is much better. The House GOP plan calls for a cut in marginal tax rates, making permanent the Bush capital gains tax cuts, and lowering the corporate tax rate. But marginal tax rates are already low. Cutting them further isn't likely to have a major impact.

Still, the moment is ripe for the right stimulus. There's a market for a thoughtful alternative to the Pelosi-Obama bill. The Democrats want Americans to use deficit spending to reshape society along liberal lines. A Republican stimulus should promote conservative goals.

The plan might start with a payroll tax holiday. Lawrence Lindsey and John H. Makin have done a ton of work outlining why a payroll tax cut or temporary suspension would be good for the economy. Makin writes that a 12- to 18-month suspension in the payroll tax would immediately increase personal disposable income by 3.5 percent. Workers would have an instant raise that would be larger, and last longer, than the "Making Work Pay" tax credit in the Democratic plan.

Just as important, the payroll tax holiday would lower the cost of labor. Freed of the tax, employers would have an easier time hiring workers and paying them well. Yes, cutting or suspending the payroll tax would increase the deficit. So would the Democratic plan. But, if we are going to run deficits, we might as well do so in a way that increases the chances the economy will improve. The payroll tax holiday passes that test.

President Obama should find it hard to resist such a proposal. The payroll tax hits 60 percent of Americans, so a holiday would benefit a large majority of the president's constituents. Furthermore, since the payroll tax is regressive, cutting or suspending it would help the poor the most. Obama could be bipartisan, pro-labor, and pro-business all at once. Catnip to a politician who likes to avoid division.

Republicans also have to overcome some of their aversion to government spending. The flaw in the House stimulus bill is not that it spends money. It's that it spends money too slowly, and what money the bill does spend hardly goes to durable public goods. Thus the GOP's job: Shift the direct spending from useless liberal appropriations to constructive and long-lasting conservative projects.

First, Republicans could propose a more generous unemployment benefit than the one the Democrats are offering. The Republicans want to be the pro-family party. That should include families whose breadwinners are out of work. The money could come from eliminating the endless tax loopholes and subsidies for alternative energy in the current plan. Put the Democrats on the spot. Who do they care about more? Greens or the unemployed?

House minority leader John Boehner scored a victory when he attacked the millions of dollars in subsidies for contraceptives in the original House plan. Boehner put Obama on the defensive. The subsidies were stricken from the bill. Good start. Now up the ante. Why not ask that the contraceptive money go to suburban commuters instead? Send it to state and local governments to help them implement innovative programs like congestion pricing and private-public toll roads.

More than 55 million people live in the Northeast Corridor. They spend most of their lives stuck in traffic. They will be grateful to the political party that stops spending on refurbishing government office buildings and instead uses that money to construct bridges, roads, tunnels, and overpasses. Why? Because they recognize that more pavement shortens commutes, improves productivity, and lets them have dinner with the kids.

Ideally, a conservative stimulus would split direct spending between infrastructure and defense. The American Enterprise Institute's Tom Donnelly has crunched the numbers and made the case for defense stimulus at length (you can find his report on AEI's website). A plan like Donnelly's would build on President Obama's promise to expand the size of the Army and Marine Corps. It would give soldiers a raise and better health care, replenish U.S. weapons inventories, and create American jobs through defense contracting. It would spur investment and job creation in spin-off industries such as aerospace and the IT sector. It would promote the most important public good: security. And economic recovery is more likely in a secure world than in one where American interests are at risk.

The Democrats' stimulus proposals are weak. Those plans barely meet the Democrats' own Keynesian standards for successful fiscal policy. But times are tough. Republicans needn't simply play defense. They can help the unemployed. Cut the payroll tax. Lay pavement. Rebuild our defenses. Watch the economy recover. And reap the political rewards.

—Matthew Continetti

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Up the Academy

Just what America needs—more 'public servants.' BY ANDREW FERGUSON

GARY LOCKE

Chris Myers Asch, who came up with the idea, says the U.S. Public Service Academy would be just like a military academy, "but without the guns." If you too can imagine such a mind-bending concept—a bull without horns, a sow without teats—then this, as the president says, is your moment; now is your time. The U.S. Public Service Academy has a very good chance of becoming a reality and, soon after, a perfect symbol of our new era.

Asch is a 35-year-old former teacher from Washington, D.C. His idea arrived suddenly a few years ago, when Hurricane Katrina made a hash of pretensions to competence at all levels of government, from the feds on down. Part of the problem, he saw, was that fewer and fewer talented people were going into government work—a point proved beyond all disputation by the Bush administration—and one reason for this was the decline in prestige attached to a life of "public service," as running the government is often called.

The academy is his solution to both problems, the dearth of talent and the lack of prestige. He envisions a federally chartered and federally funded four-year liberal arts college, settled on a campus in Washington, D.C., with room for 5,000 aspiring public servants at a time. They will be chosen proportionally from all 50 states, in a process similar to the one that draws recruits to the military academies. And just like West Point, Annapolis, and that academy the Air Force runs wherever, the USPSA will offer students a strict, comprehensive curriculum, mostly in history, geography, and civics, but leavened with courses in "leadership studies." The federal government will pay for the education. In return, the students agree to five years of employment in a government agency ofz their choosing after they graduate.

Launching the public service academy will require an act of Congress, followed by the presidential signature, and also a bit more than $200 million a year. The money should be no obstacle, especially if the allocation can be declared economically stimulative and slipped somewhere in between earmarks to weatherize the DMV in Petaluma and to plant endive on the "green roofs" of middle schools in Camden, New Jersey. The only immediate problem is that some of the program's ardent congressional boosters have left Capitol Hill, most prominently Joe Biden and Hillary Clinton. Of course, they both got promotions, and from their new perches they'll likely have even more influence over how, when, and whether Asch's academy is built.

It was Clinton, in fact, who first brought Asch's dream to the attention of the political world. She endorsed it during the presidential debates in 2007, when the candidates were insisting that each was more uniquely committed to launching a new, unprecedented era of public service than the others. Presidential candidates have been making this commitment to an unprecedented era of public service for the last 50 years, and the USPSA was Clinton's way of doubling down—a kind of "top this" moment. Her staff put the idea into legislative

Andrew Ferguson is a senior editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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form and she introduced the bill in the Senate, where it rang up an additional 23 sponsors. More than 120 congressmen, including Rahm Emanuel, signed on in the House. Beyond Capitol Hill, Asch has acquired an impressive, if slightly predictable, list of endorsers, including Sandra Day O'Connor, Madeleine Albright, Lee Hamilton, James Leach, Bob Kerrey, and, of course, David Abshire, but not, inexplicably, Colin Powell. Maybe he was sick that day.

Asch hopes Congress funds the academy in a free standing bill, rather than as part of the larger (very large) stimulus package. "We don't want this done on the sly," he says. "We want to draw attention to it. This is a grand and exciting idea, part of a large and exciting movement."

Like so many grand and exciting ideas, this one is meant to solve several problems at once, Swiss-army-knife-style. Fully 90 percent of senior civil servants will be eligible to retire over the next decade. Already, Asch notes, several government agencies are reporting shortages of personnel. The idea that more people should be working for the government is very popular at the moment. The USPSA promises to deliver a freshet of eager young people rigorously pre-trained in "leadership skills."

But their numbers—about 1,300 a year—will be small, especially relative to what Asch says is the urgent need for public leaders and public servants (the terms, oddly enough, are used interchangeably: These servants will be trained to lead). The National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs says there are more than 1,000 programs teaching "leadership" on college campuses, in addition to more than 150 accredited schools of public administration. Most of them think they're already doing what a government-run academy would do.

Not so, boosters say: The academy will be . . . somehow . . . different. For one thing, there's the prestige. The government charter will make a USPSA degree more glamorous than your typical MPA. And students will be part of the larger movement of public service that President Obama is about to unleash upon the country with unprecedented force, like all those presidents before him. The movement will ensure that everyone on campus is on a "shared mission" to lead/serve. American University's Robert Tobias says that this coziness is key.

"The idea that people would be together for four years creating a culture that will support them from there on is what distinguishes this from other universities," Tobias recently told a panel at the American Enterprise Institute. "It's created by people working together on the same kinds of projects with the same goal in mind, and that is public service."

To some ears, this argument in favor of the academy sounds like an argument against it. You can wonder whether the military academy is really a good model for training people whose job, theoretically, will be to respond humbly to popular sensitivities. Not everyone wants a governing class that is not only just as powerful as the one we already have but also more intelligent, knowledgeable, and disciplined, with many more ideas about how to use their power and the skill to execute them. At least the military has civilian control. The graduates of this academy *would be* the civilian control. The Bismarckian odor is hard to miss.

It would be less troubling if someone would just settle on a definition and tell us what *public service* is. From overuse it's in danger of becoming a mere cant phrase, just as often a euphemism for power-hunger or busybodyism as for selfless acts of kindness or sacrifice. President Obama himself uses the phrase to cover a vast number of tasks that bear no resemblance to one another, in intent or effect: The gentle soul who ladles soup at a homeless shelter is a public servant, and so is the grunt getting shot at in Iraq, and so is the shark fresh out of law school who takes delight in filing lawsuits against small-time farmers for mishandling manure. All, all are public servants, apparently. And it's not hard to guess which kind of servant the U.S. Public Service Academy will produce. ♦

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The Next Big Stink

The killjoys are back. What do they have in store for us? BY P. J. O'ROURKE

The killjoys are back in charge—the mopes, the fusstails, the glum pots. Their wet blanket has been thrown over the White House and Congress. They're worrying up a storm. (Good thing that George W. Bush is no longer in charge of the weather and FEMA the way he was during Hurricane Katrina.) America is experiencing a polar ice cap and financial meltdown, causing sea levels to rise and sending cold water flooding into Wall Street where the rapidly acidifying ocean is corroding our 401(k)s and releasing mortgage securities full of hot air into the atmosphere until our every breath is full of CO_2 especially when we exhale, which should be banned when children are present lest their uninsured health care be harmed by second-hand greenhouse gases that are causing endangerment of plant and animal species (Republicans are extinct already), leading to a shortage of green, leafy vegetables vital to the fight against America's growing epidemics of obese hunger and housing foreclosures on the homeless.

You remember the killjoys. They've been all over liberal Democratic politics like ugly on an ape since the Carter administration. They are the people who conceived the late, little-mourned, double-nickel speed limit, which is doubtless now rising undead from its grave to turn us all into road zombies dragging ourselves down I-70 numbed to a state of murderous catatonia by our 55-mile-per-hour rate of travel.

The killjoys initiated automobile crash standards so rigorous that we can't buy a car that hasn't been dropped from the top of a phone pole with our whole family strapped inside. (Click It or Ticket!) And they wrote the infant car seat regulations that require devices so complex, with such arcane rules for use, that each car seat now comes from the manufacturer with its own mechanical engineer and each infant comes from the maternity ward with its own lawyer.

Nor is the kid exempt from legislative backseat driving just because she (the pronoun that every publication with a Second Class mailing permit is federally mandated to use in alternate sentences) has emerged from the car. Children must now wear helmets to bike, ski, rollerblade, or skateboard and wear an additional helmet—in case they collide with hard porcelain and injure their tailbones—on their butts when they go to the toilet. The only time children are allowed to remove their safety helmets is when they catch a parent smoking cigarettes. In that case they can doff protective headgear to better reveal facial expressions of shock, horror, shame, and disappointment. (Barack, you stand warned.) Children learn these facial expressions in the 1,000 hours of compulsory anti-tobacco education that America's public schools have made time for by eliminating the minute of silence in the morning (courtesy of the ACLU) and also reading and math.

The only way I can sneak a smoke nowadays is to borrow a buddy's hunting cabin in the Maine backwoods, lock myself in the bathroom, and stand in the shower stall with the curtain pulled tight and the water running. You'd think this would extinguish my Marlboro Light. However, thanks to low-flow shower heads required by federal law to conserve a precious resource that I thought we were about to have too much of due to the melting of polar ice, I can smoke in the shower with the faucets on full blast and stay bone dry. (Flushing the filter tip down the water-conserving john is another matter.)

Sucking the fun out of life has always been a key component of political science. The inventors of modern politics, the English Puritans, are rightly a byword for buzz-kill and gloomocracy. The Puritans banned all theatrical performances because of the dangers of . . . mmmmm . . . they'd think of something . . . actors playing Mercutio and Tybalt having a sword fight in *Romeo and Juliet* without wearing bike helmets.

Creating alarms about trans fats or energy sustainability expands the purview of government almost as well as war, without all the patriarchal, exclusionist, sexist heroism and hurtful, insensitive, patriotic language. Gas prices frighteningly high? Declare a moral equivalent of Nagasaki. Arteries clogged? Pass a law requiring the chicken nugget fry-basket to be dunked in boiling mint tea.

Raining on parades requires no skill or effort on the part of a politician. This is what draws people—and Democrats—into politics. All a Democrat needs is the upper-story window of public attention and the chamber pot of rhetoric. How else to explain Joe Biden's rise as a flannel-mouthed, four-flushing, limelight-stealing head louse?

Being a poke-nose, a nanny-pants, and a wowser satisfies the pathetic need of the political class to feel self-important and powerful. Banning paper *and* plastic and making shoppers carry their groceries home in their mouths like dogs is just the thing to make a little tin humanist in the Obama West Wing think he's admiral of the Uzbek Navy.

Not that Pecksniff Buttinskiism is a strictly partisan matter. Long-lipped howler Republican Drys teamed up with spigot-bigot William Jennings Bryan to enact Prohibition. The GOP is home to blue noses of a size as if room had been made on Mt. Rush-

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more for a bust of Andrew Volstead. Meanwhile Democrats do have their pleasures—drinking bong water at gay weddings and so forth. Plus there is the Kennedy family to be considered, with their penchant for exciting risk—skiing into trees, sleeping with the babysitter, and claiming entitlement to New York Senate seats.

Republicans stick their schnozollas into other people's underpants and stashes (but not gun cabinets). In the matter of scolding foreigners and muscling in on the governance of lesser breeds without the law, Republicans are a regular pain in the atlas. But it is the Democrats who've learned to make political honey out of minding other people's beeswax. Not satisfied with mere bossy irritation of the public, Democrats have created whole branches of government—the Department of Labor, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Education, the Department of Tofu and Sprouts. Democrats have opened barrels of (USDA inspected!) pork sufficient to feed all of their high-binding and wire-pulling friends, relatives, cronies, and the state government of Illinois. Democratic wisenheimers have managed to get themselves elected Big Chief Itch-and-Rub of every worry and to be appointed Pharaoh of Fret for every concern. They are the Party of Eliot Spitzer. And we the citizenry are Eliot Spitzer's wife.

How are the Democrats going to demean and humiliate us next? What issue will the Democrats fasten upon as a threat to the commonweal and a hazard to the planet? What busybody ordinance and ass-and-elbows regulation will be put upon the books for our own good?

It's important to find out what type of private interest or kind of human enjoyment the Democrats are going to pass a law against. We could lobby to defeat it. (Although our best lobbyists are in jail.) We could brace ourselves to endure it. (Although our endurance—witness the paltry vote against Timothy "H&R Block" Geithner—is nearly exhausted.) Or we could plan strategies to resist the oppression. (Dig hole behind garage; buy enormous freezer; hide the red meat.)

JASON SEILER

There are several ways to make a prediction about what the Democrats will outlaw. We might calculate the greatest statistical danger to Americans. That would be death. According to *The Statistical Abstract of the United States* there is a 1:1 rate of occurrence. But it's hard to engage in an Obama-style "dialogue" with dead people, even though they do vote in Cook County. There is, in theory, a "death tax," but enforcement difficulties arise when the deceased don't pay it. Rahm Emanuel is, we are almost certain, a vampire. But whether this will give the Obama administration a pro- or anti-death tilt is unclear.

Another way to foretell proscription is to look at the most common or frequently occurring danger to Americans. What causes the most crime, violence, unemployment, divorce, disease, and mental illness? But that brings us back to Andrew Volstead, who was a Republican. Democrats will have to be satisfied with nibbling around the edges of this issue, providing additional funding for local enforcement efforts to curtail Managing a Hedge Fund While Impaired, etc. Also Democratic party loyalist trial lawyers can be given greater scope, allowing more bar and restaurant patrons to sue for being "Over-Served." Some friends of mine and I are bringing a class action

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suit against P.J. Clarke's in New York, where we met our first wives.

Or we could simply poll the nation and determine what the average American *perceives* as the greatest danger. Young black males in hoodies. But any action on this front would put the Obama administration in danger of support by Bill Cosby.

In fact, we'd be wrong to use any of the above methods to foresee what Democrats will attempt to constrain or forbid. A better way to approach the problem is to ask, "What would annoy the most people the most often?" That is the true test of government intervention in life. The Secular Grail of liberal Democrats is a program or policy that combines the intrusion of the census, the depredations of the income tax, the duress of school busing to achieve racial balance, the expense of Social Security, the nuisance of Medicare paperwork, the inconvenience of car registration, the pettiness of a congressional investigation, and the fine print on the label of flame-resistant children's pajamas.

My guess is that the next great government crusade will be against soap. The president will appoint a Blue Ribbon Commission, which will determine that soap releases polluting grime into the ecosystem, leads to aquifer depletion, and contains fatty acids that laboratory studies have shown to be acidic and not fat-free. Soap encourages teenage pregnancy as well as adult sexual activity with multiple partners, driving America's divorce rate higher, causing more children to live under the poverty line in single-parent households. Soap is a factor in many cases of child abuse, according to small boys in bathtubs. Soap bubbles may contain methane, especially if rising to the surface of bath water containing small boys. Soap marketing sends the wrong message about the Ivory trade and also about Irish Spring, which is being altered by climate change. Soap degrades the flame-resistant properties of children's pajamas. And soap makes whales foam when they spout.

Socialism—you can smell it coming. ♦

The Art of Bailouts

Another asset class in deep doodoo.

BY SAM SCHULMAN

For years, financial leaders, advised by highly paid experts, have bought and borrowed to acquire a portfolio of world-class assets, the intrinsic value of which has never been in question. A few bears jeered, but were quickly priced out of the market. Those days—so recent—are no more. Asset prices haven't just declined—sometimes there's no sale at all. Clever managers in London and New York are setting up vulture funds to acquire troubled assets on the cheap, but what is cheap today may be only the beginning. What if the assets have no real value? What if they are actually toxic—not merely worthless in themselves, but tend to pull other, still valuable assets into a black hole of complete illiquidity?

I describe, of course, the current market for contemporary art. "High returns for high art are swept away," proclaimed the *Times* of London. "Nobody's going to be selling a Jeff Koons or a Bacon or a Lichtenstein any time soon," Tobias Meyer, the head of Sotheby's contemporary art department, told the *New York Times* in December. "Why would they, since they missed the boat?" Take a well-known name like Damien Hirst, the only living artist whose work is as instantly visualized as Picasso's was to our grandparents. Hirst's dead animals float in a sea of formaldehyde reminiscent of the serene azure of the old Wachovia logo. For over a decade, sales of his product have made collectors and dealers as happy as the tellers at my local Washington Mutual branch. Eager buyers devoured about $200 million worth of his product at a Sotheby's London auction last September. On November 5, disaster struck. In New York auctions characterized as "brutal," 11 out of 17 lots of Hirst masterpieces remained unsold.

Hirst and other blue-chips like Jeff Koons and Lucien Freud are only the best-known victims. There are dozens of other artists whose prices had previously risen every year, and now may have no market at all. The names of these artists—such as Jan De Cock, Cecily Brown, Peter Doig, Marlene Dumas, Elizabeth Peyton, Richard Prince, Anselm Reyle, Marcus Ruff, Rudolf Stingel—are well known to people like Penny Pritzker, the noted Chicago art collector, finance chairperson of the Obama campaign, and major-domo of the inaugural festivities. On the other hand, I hope that you are only vaguely familiar with these names, because their works are the vital market-entry points for the struggling young collectors who have helped to make our country what it is. Their dreary but selfless lives the *Art Newspaper* described movingly last fall, "buying a work one year for, say, $150,000 (from a primary dealer) and turning it around within a year to resell the same work for, say, $500,000."

Flipping an installation for a 200 percent profit may not sound like much to you, me, and the folks who designed John Thain's Merrill Lynch office (Michael S. Smith Design, in case you're in the market). But these small transactions are important to the art market. The artists whom these collectors accumulate are the stalwart IndyMacs and OneUnited Banks of the art world. They are essential to the free movement of capital from the pockets of socially ambitious auction-house buyers into the lofts of Bushwick and the organic gardens of the Hudson Valley. Until the credit crunch, the work produced by such artists was regarded as a solid investment that could only

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rise in value. Collectors wondered only how long they would have to hold them and how high they would go. But in the present crisis, a passing remark by Rob Storr or Chuck Schumer can send the value of artworks reeling into the world of the pink sheets. While Sotheby's and Christie's have fired scores of the most talented art-market professionals in the last two months—creating a lost generation of art-market professionals—Elizabeth Peyton just paints and paints, swelling inventory to dangerous levels.

I have the solution to this problem. I call it the "Bad Museum." The Bad Museum is a device that will save the art market; make collectors, gallerists, art consultants, and auctioneers whole again; and restore the unique power of art to generate jobs and absorb capital. The establishment of a Bad Museum will stabilize prices in much the same way that the Resolution Trust Corporation saved the credit markets in the 1980s.

Here's how it works. Created by our new administration, the Bad Museum will buy what can only be called Bad Art—artworks that either have not sold at a gallery or an art fair or have not met their pre-auction estimate. The Bad Museum may be set up in Washington, but I think it would be more appropriate if it were to be located in one of the soon-to-be-abandoned sites that symbolize the false ideals of the Bush administration: the Yucca, Nevada, nuclear fuel storage area; the National Petroleum Strategic Reserve; or the climate-controlled buildings of the Guantánamo Detention Center.

What's more, the Bad Museum would morally undo the mistakes of the Bush-era art market, in which buyers and sellers determined an object's worth. Instead, there would be strict scientific standards of judgment to justify its purchases, in keeping with the Obama administration's resolve to place science first in policymaking, replacing mere politics in importance. To define these new standards for art, we can do no better than to do what Penny Pritzker, the Soros family, and many others have done: hire Thea Westreich, art adviser.

Like a 21st-century Cassandra, Westreich foresaw the present crisis long ago. In 2006, she told *New York* magazine exactly what was wrong with collectors of contemporary art: "Today's art market is by and large misinformed." Collectors are "buying based on market trends rather than art-historical standards." Ignoring art-historical standards is a common mistake, but easy to avoid with the proper advice. When Westreich advised George Soros's son to buy a Christopher Wool piece for six times more than anyone had ever paid for one before, it seemed expensive—imagine Westreich's fee on top of the $600,000 for the piece—but allowed young Soros to align himself with history. When Westreich advised Penny Pritzker which among 25 artists she should hire to adorn the Pritzker family's new Hyatt Center office complex in Chicago, she didn't focus on cost, but certainty. Keith Tyson, the British artist who won the test, now hangs in the atrium—not just décor but Turner Prize-winning décor (and just imagine what kind of cartoonish art an uncultivated kitsch-frau like Sarah Palin might choose for a major federal building site!). As Westreich has said, "what is great in the history of art stays expensive." The taxpayers can't lose.

The naïve art-lover-in-the-street may raise objections to my scheme. The artists whose works aren't selling are the very same artists whose prices have risen so high for the past 15 years, and their works are in major collections worldwide. Would it not tend to devalue the investment that museum curators and still-solvent hedge fund operators have made? And would it not therefore shake the collateral value of a whole class of Good Art in Good Museums, Good Galleries, and Good Collections?

It would be a fair objection, had it been raised before November 5, 2008. But we now can see it is based on a complete misunderstanding of the fact that the Bush-era art market must be done away with. The Bad Art acquired by the Bad Museum would not in fact be what used to be called aesthetically bad—not part of art history. It would merely have a scientifically determined floor put under its impartially determined art-historical value. The art market as a whole will soon recover, as the survivors of the financial crash (which, in a curious coincidence, took place at the very same time as the art-market crash) start to spend again. At this point, the buyers will turn to the Bad Museum to make discreet purchases of Bad Art at an advantageous discount. Best of all, upon delivery, this Bad Art will immediately become great art—the kind of art that collectors may buy to own, but really, as Westreich says, they are "just caring for works that really belong to *art history*."

We do live in the real world, and so for public consumption, my conception of the Bad Museum must of course be rebranded. I suggest that the actual Bad Museum be named the Joan Mondale Museum, in honor of the ceramicist/Second Lady whom *ArtNews* dubbed "Joan of Art" in 1977 for her work in bringing the arts under the protective wing of government where they belong.

There is little time to waste in the present crisis. I'm still a young man, but I'm old enough to weary my friends with memories of Julian Schnabel clearing my table at Max's Kansas City in 1972. That I could use some fresh anecdotes I won't deny, but I don't want them to be tales of disaster. Spare me from telling my grandchildren about how the once-fashionable painter Cecily Brown was reduced to bringing me my Old-Fashioneds at Whiskey Park—just the way I like them—simply because the art collecting quants couldn't determine the NPV of her luscious, ripe canvasses.

And who knows—perhaps my notion may have other applications. We might see a proposal for a Bad Bank that would acquire Bad Assets now held by institutions that are perfectly sound—were it not for the existence of the Bad Assets. Remind me to drop a note to Tim and Larry when I get back from the Brandeis protest meeting. Those philistines want to sell off their art just to save their university. And at the bottom of the market! ♦

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A Supreme Sense of Entitlement

Or, how not to save a failing family business.

BY PHILIP TERZIAN

Caroline Kennedy's swipe at a Senate seat in New York ended in debacle last week, and Governor David Paterson bore the brunt of the blame. With some reason: His dithering, ineptitude, and needless dissembling reminded New Yorkers of the squalid circumstances that had brought him to the governorship in the first place.

But blame does not rest exclusively, or even primarily, with Paterson: The origins of this embarrassing spectacle may be traced to the influence of the late Joseph P. Kennedy—and to a lesser extent his wife, Rose. For whatever else that successful Boston speculator/whiskey impresario/philanderer/movie magnate and his wife instilled in their numerous descendants, a supreme sense of entitlement, especially in politics, seems to have firmly taken root.

Consider Kennedy's three politician sons, John, Robert, and Edward. Robert and John, with strikingly minimal qualifications, and temperaments ill-suited to legislative careers, supplanted two distinguished veteran Republican senators (Henry Cabot Lodge Jr., Kenneth Keating) in two separate states for the sake of their own national ambitions. Their younger brother Edward, barely 30 years old and already marked as the family delinquent, moved effortlessly into John's seat—kept warm by a compliant tribal retainer—in 1962 by defeating Lodge's son George, later a much-admired writer/professor at the Harvard Business School.

Ted and Caroline Kennedy, 2003

NEWSCOM

Like our new vice president, Teddy Kennedy has spent his adult life almost entirely in the Senate, and while he is celebrated as the "Lion of the Senate" during his terminal illness, his place in the history books is undoubtedly secured by his status as the driver of the Oldsmobile 88 that plunged off Dike Bridge at Chappaquiddick, drowning his female passenger, in 1969.

In the 40 years since that memorable night, the Kennedy fortunes in politics have fallen surprisingly low, and may be said to be near extinction. It is sometimes difficult to discern this interesting fact, inasmuch as the popular culture has never ceased to be entranced by the spectacle of the ever-expanding family, and the journalistic-academic world has ascribed to them all manner of impressive capacities and civic virtues even as the blood runs distressingly thin.

Here a quick glance at some of Robert's children is instructive. One of them, David, died of a drug overdose in Palm Beach just a year after another, Robert Jr., was arrested for possession of heroin at the Rapid City, S.D., airport. Courtney's second husband was an Irish Republican Army militant named Paul Hill. Max, who had threatened to run for Congress in California, began campaigning for a House seat in Massachusetts but ceased his efforts when, in his first public appearance, "he scratched his head, giggled nervously, lost his place several times and misnamed at least one member of the U.S. Supreme Court," according to the *Los Angeles Times*. The fact that, as a student at Harvard, he had assaulted a campus policeman didn't help, either.

Michael was in the midst of accusations of having sexual intercourse with his children's teenaged babysitter when he was killed in a skiing accident. Joseph II, the great hope of the family after his father's murder, was elected to Congress from Massachusetts in 1986 and served six terms, but enjoyed a reputation for bumptiousness rather than statesmanship, and is probably best known for his penchant for befriending Caribbean tyrants (Jean-Paul Aristide of Haiti and, more recently, Hugo Chávez of Venezuela). His sister Kathleen arrived in Maryland in 1986, promptly ran for Congress, and was defeated. A decade later she served two terms as lieuten-

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ant governor on the ticket with Governor Parris Glendening, but lost her own 2002 campaign for governor—in a state with an overhwelming Democratic edge in registration.

As it happens, the various personal disasters, rape trials, Ivy League diplomas, abortive annulments, air catastrophes, and exhaustive press coverage that have characterized the Kennedy saga in our time have obscured the fact that, at this moment, only two members of the family (apart from Teddy) are in public office: Arnold Schwarzenegger, a mere in-law who is also a Republican, and Teddy's younger son, Patrick, whose history is sadly emblematic.

Having washed out of Georgetown and retreated to Providence College, Patrick was elected to the Rhode Island legislature while pursuing his undergraduate career, then in due course was elevated to Congress. He was, at first, taken up by the minority leader, Richard Gephardt, as a Democratic fundraising device; but his own peculiar demons—vandalizing a rented yacht, abusing an airport employee, crashing his car into a police barrier in the dead of night while en route to an imaginary House vote—soon reduced him to laughingstock status in the nation's capital, and deprived him of Gephardt's patronage. Poor Patrick is now condemned to life tenure in the lower chamber, on behalf of Rhode Island, where his (now publicly acknowledged) manic depression has made him a pharmaceutical role model.

When John F. Kennedy Jr. crashed his private plane into Long Island Sound, killing himself, his wife, and his sister-in-law in 1999, it was said that John, publisher of the now-defunct *George* magazine, was considering politics and assessing his presidential prospects. No one says such things about Patrick.

As with the hapless Patrick, the most impressive aspect of Caroline Kennedy's brief campaign for appointment was its sheer presumption. Some have argued, with scant evidence, that her sex had something to do with the collapse of her effort—that she was held to some undefined double standard—and that a male member of the Kennedy family would have prevailed.

This argument is difficult to take seriously, however, when even so mild-mannered an observer of the process as the *Washington Post*'s David Broder could describe the transcript of her debut interview with the *New York Times* as "so studded with 'you knows' and broken sentences as to invite a Tina Fey imitation." The sad truth is that the elaborately crafted persona—the saccharine mystique, Harvard imprint, coauthored books, well-advertised noblesse oblige—disguised a woman with no claim to a Senate seat apart from her maiden name, unwilling to present herself for election to voters, and demanding a plum that, as a Kennedy, she had every reason to expect would fall in her lap. ♦

Triangulation II

A political strategy for congressional Republicans.

BY TOD LINDBERG

The singular advantage of being in the opposition is that the majority has to make the first move, and unlike chess, going first conveys no advantage the majority doesn't already enjoy. What was striking last week about the House's consideration of the stimulus package was the glimpse it offered of a potentially valuable political strategy for Republicans. Call it "Triangulation II"—the GOP effort to gain advantage by dividing Democrats in Congress from President Obama.

In its previous incarnation, you will recall, triangulation was the strategy Bill Clinton pursued when faced with a new GOP congressional majority in 1995. The idea was to assume a posture of reasonableness between what he portrayed as two extremes: the big-government liberalism of congressional Democrats and the right-wing radicalism of the GOP. Clinton decided he could do business with the congressional majority where he was broadly supportive of the result and where public opinion was favorable (welfare reform, tax cuts, spending restraint), while at the same time painting himself as tamping down GOP excess. But he could oppose the GOP outright when it overstepped (the government shutdown). He decided explicitly *not* to make the cause of congressional Democrats his own. The political realm in 1995-96 had three distinct poles: the GOP congressional majority, the Democratic minority, and the Democratic White House.

Triangulation II is going to be somewhat different because of the different political balance of power, but the essential idea is the same: to obtain advantage by substituting a tripartite configuration for the bipolar partisan split. Republicans will try to portray themselves as reasonable, responsive, and serious not in comparison with Democrats in general, but in comparison with liberal House and Senate Democrats—a case they will make by taking seriously Obama's professed desire to put bitter partisan divisions aside.

It's important not to misunderstand the character of the unanimous GOP House vote (with 11 Democrats joining) against the stimulus package. Left-leaning commentators

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have decried the GOP for still not "getting it"—that their policies and preferences have been discredited by events and repudiated by voters. Conservative commentators, meanwhile, have tended to interpret the vote as the rediscovery of true conservative principle: making a stand for what's right after years of vacillation and uncertainty. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given that both sides are viewing the question through their respective ideological prisms, their conclusions are analytically identical; the difference is whether you describe the result as virtuous or wicked.

They're also mainly wrong. The reason Republicans voted unanimously against the package is that *they had no say in the drafting of the legislation*. The bill was entirely the product of the House Democratic leadership, which relied on the prerogative of absolute majority rule in the lower chamber to craft a bill without GOP input or even consultation.

No doubt, Democrats hoped for and may even have expected some GOP support for the bill, if not from Republicans' finally "getting it," then from the minority party's fear of opposing the wishes of a popular new president in a time of national crisis. And that is where the Democratic miscalculation comes in. Yes, the new president is popular. Yes, something must be done. But Obama's popularity doesn't necessarily transfer to Democrats in Congress. And it does not follow that because the Democratic House majority has the power to offer its own answer to the question of what must be done that the answer is presumptively correct.

House Republican leaders were quite astute politically to remind Obama of his post-partisan or trans-partisan aspirations at their White House meeting before the vote. In the game of Triangulation II, he is cast as a potentially reasonable player and one whose heart is in the right, bipartisan place. Republicans want to work with him, but that has to mean more than voting in favor of legislation they had no part in crafting. It is up to Obama to make a choice between accommodating the wishes of congressional Democrats and of being true to his aspirations.

And about the wishes of congressional Democrats: The more independent voters hear about the details of the stimulus package, especially the many elements that have next to nothing to do with stimulating the economy, the less they seem to like it. Democrats put the legislation out there, and Republicans now have ample opportunity to criticize it in all its hideous detail. This affords them the opportunity to describe how they would have stimulated the economy differently and better—and with a little polling and focus-group research, more popularly.

What, then, does Obama do? Either he casts his lot with the Democratic congressional majority, taking its priorities as his own. Or he decides to make a sincere effort to draw the GOP in—which means accepting some Republican legislative proposals. If Republicans are clever, the stimulus package is hardly the last time Obama will have to make such a choice.

In 2001, George W. Bush ceded vast influence to Senator Ted Kennedy in crafting the "No Child Left Behind" education reform bill, to the consternation of many conservatives. Subsequently, he mainly gave the GOP congressional majority its way, especially on spending, but also on a long string of social-issues legislation that became the most salient element of the GOP congressional brand going into the majority-losing 2006 election. Neither strategy was especially palatable to the players: the first mainly for reasons internal to the GOP; the second because of a popular perception of GOP excess.

That's the dilemma in a nutshell: internal party division or a drift toward partisan excess. There is no obvious solution, for the simple reason that the president's interests and the congressional majority's interests diverge *even if they are from the same party.*

When the Democratic House majority has given Republicans no say, they have an opportunity to vote "no" precisely because they have had no say—and then knock on the White House door to complain. If the GOP becomes more sophisticated in its approach, its House leaders will become more systematic in fleshing out alternatives to Democratic legislation and doing their best to be seen offering their proposals to Obama as a starting point for post-partisan compromise.

Then comes the interesting hypothetical question of what to do if Obama says yes. The answer is that you've got to make a good-faith effort to do a deal.

That may bother some of those for whom ideological purity in opposition is top priority (and who have misconstrued the House GOP stimulus vote in those terms). But they will be able to take partial consolation in three areas: First, the ensuing legislation will be more conservative (or at least less liberal) than any conceivable alternative. Second, the GOP will have a persuasive case to take to voters that its proposals are more reasonable than those of congressional Democrats. Third, if the White House and the Democratic congressional leadership are at odds, the certain result will be turmoil among Democrats.

No political strategy is cost-free. The advantage of Triangulation II is that its focus on process enables Republicans to advance ideas they want in contrast to the legislative druthers of congressional Democrats. These can include pro-market measures, spending restraint, tax cuts, and general opposition to the return of big, bureaucratic government.

It seems unlikely that Obama will ultimately want to make many deals that cut the GOP in, but his post-partisan rhetoric has created an opening. Republicans will make the most of it by taking him at his word and asking for a place at the table—and by voting "no," with their own proposals in hand, when they don't get one. ♦

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Honor Among Bankers

Europe vs. America.

BY JAMES BOWMAN

The other day, an Irishman committed suicide. Patrick Rocca, who was described in the *Times* of London as "a poster boy for Ireland's Celtic tiger economy" and "seemed to embody the shiny world into which Ireland transformed itself after decades on the periphery of Europe," shot himself in the head in his home near Dublin while his wife was taking their three children to school. He was said to have been on the hook for some 20 million euros in loans with the failing Anglo-Irish bank, then in the process of being nationalized.

A few weeks earlier a German billionaire, Adolf Merckle, threw himself in front of a train after losing hundreds of millions by betting on a downturn in Volkswagen shares shortly before the company was acquired by Porsche. He was said still to be worth the equivalent of $8 billion when he died. A couple of months earlier, Kirk Stephenson, a New Zealander living in London who was chief operating officer of Olivant Advisers, an investment firm, also went under a train after sustaining serious losses. Just before Christmas, a Dane, Christen Schnor, who was head of insurance at HSBC banking, hanged himself in a London hotel room. Around the same time, a French nobleman, Rene-Thierry Magon de la Villehuchet, was found with his wrists slashed in his New York office after investing $1.4 billion of his own and other people's money in the alleged $50 billion Ponzi scheme of Bernard Madoff.

Meanwhile, what was Bernard Madoff himself doing—besides preparing his legal defense and managing to stay out of jail in spite of allegations of trying to transfer assets to family members? Well, for one thing he might have been enjoying an article in the *New York Times* that suggested he was a psychopath. It would have been an "easy answer," to the mystery of Mr. Madoff, said the *Times* reporters, Julie Creswell and Landon Thomas Jr., to conclude that he was merely "a charlatan of epic proportions." Instead, we were told that "a more complex and layered observation of his actions" by "some analysts" might well reveal that—in addition to being (according to friends) "very smart," "very industrious," and "a terrific salesman"—he shares "many of the destructive traits typically seen in a psychopath." How romantic! No easy answers there, then.

But that's the American way. Never was a more untrue thing said than Scott Fitzgerald's dictum that there are no second acts in American lives. To be fair, Fitzgerald was writing at a time when failed bankers, brokers, and money men were supposed to throw themselves off tall buildings in response to their losses—a legend that seems not to be based on much in the way of fact. But nowadays we have nothing *but* second acts. It's a poor charlatan of any proportions, let alone epic ones, who cannot medicalize and thereby excuse, at least to some extent, his wicked or criminal behavior—and, as in Mr. Madoff's case, he may not even have to do it himself. He may go to prison for the rest of his life, but it would be surprising if he didn't attempt to follow the lead of the *New York Times* and do his best to portray himself as a psychopath, victim, or some other romantic figure.

Last spring "the D.C. Madam," Deborah Jeane Palfrey, made away with herself "after the high Roman fashion" rather than go to jail, but the economic crisis of recent months has thrown up few examples of Americans who have taken the old-fashioned view of financial disgrace. We ordinary Americans without public lives still kill ourselves when we are unhappy, depressed, or mentally disturbed, but the heroic suicide—or its nearest equivalent, the celebrity or quasi-celebrity suicide—is pretty much a thing of the past. This is because, for the most part, we have become strangers to the sense of honor and shame that still, apparently, lingers in the European breast. There is also something romantically exotic about M. Villehuchet's taking the honorable course in response to what he recognized as his own shame. In America, we have replaced honor with "self-esteem," judgment with therapy, and disgrace with "healing." As a result, we seem to have lost the capacity to see shame even when it is staring us in the face.

Thus Rod Blagojevich, having been caught red-handed trying to sell a Senate seat to the highest bidder, has responded to his impeachment by the Illinois legislature by comparing himself to Mohandas Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, and Martin Luther King Jr. Instead of appearing at his impeachment trial, he did the rounds of the talk shows in New York, submitting to some slight indignity from the gentle mockery of his interviewers in order to establish his eligibility as (now) a misbehaving celebrity for the indulgence of the great and forgiving American public. So far is our culture from a common understanding of honor and shame that no excuse is too preposterous for what would formerly have been a shameful deed.

Thus, three days after Governor Blagojevich appeared on *The View* and declined to mimic Richard Nixon—though he was said to do it well—saying "I am not a crook," HBO ran a rehabilitative documentary on disgraced preacher Ted Haggard in which the pill-popping patron of rent boys finally comes out as . . . an evangelist for therapy. The healing process is appar-

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ently well underway for Ted, and his wife, like Eliot Spitzer's, is standing by him. The disgraced—as these things go nowadays—Merrill Lynch chief executive John Thain may have been innocent, as he insisted to the media he was, of looting his failed company to pay large bonuses to its executives, but it would be a more believable claim if he were not displaying a positively Blagojevich-like chutzpah in insisting that his actions had been "completely transparent" to Bank of America, which has got stuck with the bill.

It would be very wrong indeed to wish upon the likes even of Messrs. Blagojevich, Haggard, or Thain a fate like poor M. Villehuchet's or Herr Merckle's. But it must be admitted that there is a certain dignity about these gentlemen's exit, a faint vestige of the old honor culture that was Europe's gift to the world, even if (as some would argue) we are otherwise well shot of it. It makes the unseemly competition for celebrity victimhood that is now the hallmark of American culture look tawdry by comparison, but at least we may aspire to such honor as there may be in being among the most compassionate of nations to the great who have fallen, and who demand to be pitied. ♦

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Iceland Is Melting

The financial crisis claims a government.

BY JONATHAN V. LAST

In the span of four months, Iceland's financial crisis became an economic meltdown which in turn became a political one. Last week the country's prime minister, Geir Haarde, called parliamentary elections for May, two years ahead of schedule. Three days later, Haarde resigned, his coalition unable to hold together even as a caretaker government until May. This created a political vacuum with no ruling coalition, no prime minister, and an impending vote that is going to upend Iceland's political order.

Haarde was a member of the Independence party, which has been the main political party in Iceland for nearly 80 years. Since it was formed in 1929, the Independence party has garnered more than 35 percent of the vote in all but three elections. It has been part of 22 of Iceland's 31 governments, most often as the senior partner. In recent years, the Independence party was dominated by David Oddsson, the mayor of Reykjavik who became prime minister in 1991. He occupied the seat for 13 years before handing the reins of the party to Haarde and becoming head of the central bank.

Together Haarde and Oddsson presided over the collapse. When the global crisis froze credit markets, Iceland's three large private banks faltered. As the first one teetered, Oddsson declined to bail it out, instead pushing for nationalization. This caused a chain reaction, which pushed the second bank into failure. Looking to lay the political blame elsewhere, Haarde began publicly musing that British investors—who were heavily invested in Iceland's high-yield savings accounts—might not get their money back, which caused Britain to freeze the assets of the last remaining bank, pushing it, too, into failure. By the time Haarde and Oddsson were done, the Icelandic government was holding $61 billion in debt from the failed banks, more than three times the country's GDP.

But the two weren't done. As the krona plummeted, they halted trading of the currency, then pegged it at an artificially high rate, and then halted it again after the peg broke. They announced a series of international bailouts which did not materialize. They slashed interest rates, whipping on inflation, which was already at 14 percent.

Four months later, the krona still has not been fully refloated. The OMX 15—Iceland's version of the Dow—stands at 320, down from 5,000 in July. Unemployment is 5.4 percent and rising, up from 0.8 a year ago. Iceland has already taken $2.1 billion from the IMF and is in the process of finalizing another $8 billion package of loans from the IMF and neighboring countries.

Among voters, dismay turned to fury. Icelandic politics is normally a low-intensity affair, but in November weekly protests began assembling in the square outside the Icelandic parliament. The crowds grew, sometimes topping 7,000 (Iceland's total population is 320,000) and occasionally became violent. By the time Haarde consented to new elections the weekly protests had turned into daily riots with people banging drums, setting fires, and throwing stones and eggs.

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So now, change is coming to Iceland. In the 2007 elections, the Independence party polled 37 percent of the vote, giving it 25 of 63 seats. Haarde formed an alliance with the second largest party, the Social Democrats, and between the two of them they occupied nearly all of the political space. There was no substantial opposition, the third-place party being the radical Left-Green Movement, which polled 14 percent of the vote.

The Left-Green Movement was formed in 1999 and its primary issues are, in descending order of importance, radical environmentalism, feminism, and socialism. When the crisis first manifested itself, however, the Left-Greens became the clearinghouse for anger at the banks and opposition to Haarde and Oddsson. By December their support had risen to 32 percent in the polls, making them the leading party. Geir Matthiasson, a professor of economics at the University of Iceland, says, "A left-green government is more than 95 percent likely." The only potential spoiler could come from the further left: Protest organizers say they hope to create a new political party from riots.

It's unclear what a Left-Green administration will mean for Iceland, since it will be the party's first time in power. Much of its platform is radical boilerplate. The party

> seeks to promote radical social improvements for the benefit of the public, to promote the respect and protection of nature and the environment of Iceland and to strengthen rural areas. . . . The Movement is a forum and campaign tool for those who wish to eliminate gender discrimination and ensure equal rights, women's freedom and increased equality in society.

The Left-Greens oppose membership for Iceland in the European Union and, of course, support the Palestinian cause against Israel.

The magazine *Iceland Review* reports that the Left-Greens want an immediate investigation of the banking system and the resignation of the central bank's leadership. And like many radical groups, the Left-Greens are suspicious of the IMF. The *Review* notes that the Left-Greens are keen to revisit the terms of the IMF loans. Geir Matthiasson notes, "The Left-Green party leader has been rather outspoken against the IMF plan. But he has not been very specific about what he dislikes so we don't know if this will have any practical consequences."

In the meantime, the Social Democrats are attempting to form a bridge government with the Left-Greens to get the country through to the election. This new coalition has put forward the Social Democrats' Jóhanna Sigurdardóttir for prime minister. Sigurdardóttir is a popular social affairs minister whose primary qualification is that, in addition to being a woman, she will be the world's first openly gay head of state.

To compound matters, Sigurdardóttir was forced to assent to the Progressive party's demand for a constitutional parliament to be convened this spring. In Iceland, a special election is held to select representatives to such a body, which will then have the power to amend the country's constitution. Every citizen is eligible to run for this honor except for MPs, ministers, and the president. The parliament has been called for with no clear plan as to what changes will be considered.

By this point, Iceland constitutes a book's worth of cautionary tales. The latest being that serious times do not always call forth serious politics. ♦

How to Export an Awakening

Afghanistan, viewed from Iraq.

BY DAVEED GARTENSTEIN-ROSS & JOSHUA D. GOODMAN

The United States needs a new military strategy in Afghanistan. In 2008, NATO casualties rose to an all-time annual high of 294, 155 of them U.S. soldiers. Roadside bombs and kidnappings doubled last year. Underscoring the gravity of the situation, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael Mullen, warned the House Armed Services Committee in September, "I'm not convinced we're winning in Afghanistan."

In October, General David Petraeus—best known for revamping American strategy in Iraq—inherited responsibility for Afghanistan when he assumed command of CENTCOM (whose purview stretches from Egypt and the Horn of Africa all the way through Central Asia). None knows better than he that U.S. progress in Iraq over the past two years owes much to the rise of the "Awakening" movement, an alliance of Sunni tribesmen, Iraqi nationalists, ex-Baathists, and others united by the goal of driving al Qaeda from their country. Petraeus oversaw U.S. forces' work in partnering with, protecting, and spreading the Iraqi Awakening. Now he has presented a plan to U.S. allies to spur a similar movement among Afghans.

Despite some objections (notably from Canadian defense minister Peter MacKay), the United States will almost certainly try to replicate the Iraqi Awakening's achievements in Afghanistan in the coming year. How? In considering this question, there is no better place to start than

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a 47-page memorandum written by Sheikh Ahmad Abu Risha, the leader of Iraq's Awakening movement, and submitted to the American embassy in Kabul last spring.

Abu Risha prepared his memo at the request of Christopher Dell, the U.S. deputy chief of mission in Afghanistan. Though it is not publicly available (we obtained a copy from U.S. military sources) and has received little media attention beyond an account by Eli Lake in the now-defunct *New York Sun*, the plan it outlines is likely to take on greater importance over the coming year. The memo provides a cogent analysis of the situation in Afghanistan, as well as pertinent suggestions for replicating the Awakening's success there.

Abu Risha reviews several challenges in Afghanistan. The country is beset by warlords and their followers, who "are accustomed to living freely without the rule of law." There is great distrust of Hamid Karzai's government, which some Afghans believe is conspiring with the United States in "Americanizing and changing the identity of the Afghan people." This distrust is magnified by the country's living conditions: The economy is poor, with wages low and unemployment high. Despite improvements, the government has been unable to provide adequate education and health care.

These internal factors are compounded, in Abu Risha's view, by a military picture unfavorable to the United States. He argues that "military attacks by air against Taliban locations will cause the loss of many civilian lives," and so are likely to generate hostility to U.S. and NATO forces.

Abu Risha argues, nevertheless, that there are parallels between Afghanistan today and Iraq's Anbar Province in 2006 and 2007. Most important, al Qaeda and affiliated groups in Afghanistan have created a "climate of terror" similar to what they created in Anbar, where "they murdered anyone who opposed or criticized their actions and behavior." As in Anbar, he believes, an Awakening could help Afghanistan reverse its present deadly course.

Abu Risha outlines some preconditions for success. First and foremost is the need for a strong leader. In Anbar, this was the late Abdul Sattar al-Rishawi, Abu Risha's brother, assassinated in late 2007. Such a figure must have "charisma, outstanding leadership elements and courage," he should be "a man of honor, tolerant and persistent," and he should be "a center of trust" with "a political family background." Abu Risha emphasizes, however, that NATO should not try to establish new leadership in Afghanistan, but should work within the tribes' existing hierarchies. "This is a nation," he writes, "that does not accept changes or give up control easily without a fight."

Sterling Jensen, who participated as an Army contract linguist in the U.S. government's engagement with the Iraqi tribes as the Anbar Awakening was taking shape in the fall of 2006, agrees that Abdul Sattar's leadership was critical. "The Americans didn't make the Awakening," Jensen says. "They didn't make Sheikh Ahmed or Sheikh Abdul Sattar. You can influence some [local leaders'] thinking, but it's going to be the Americans recognizing these kinds of leaders, and supporting them."

Militarily, Abu Risha recommends giving Afghan leaders "the flexibility to develop and build military forces" similar to the Awakening and Sons of Iraq militias in Iraq. (The Sons of Iraq program, initiated and paid for by the U.S. military, consisted of the formation of paramilitary organizations in an effort to spread the Awakening beyond Anbar.) In his view, this can help Afghan fighters take the lead against religious militants, while NATO forces scale back their own activities. "Keep U.S. forces' and NATO forces' movement in Afghan cities limited," Abu Risha writes, "to only fight when needed, and control the Taliban insurgency and their expanded activities." He suggests that scaling back U.S. and NATO activity will diminish public hostility to their mission.

Abu Risha sees Pakistan as a second front as long as al Qaeda's senior leadership is ensconced in Pakistan's tribal areas. Islamic militants now routinely launch their attacks on Afghanistan from these tribal areas. Abu Risha encourages the United States to "help and support Pakistan in the fight against terrorism," and argues that an Afghan Awakening will depend in part on "strong and influential figures in Pakistan."

There are not only military but also political dimensions to Abu Risha's strategy. He recognizes Afghanistan's predominantly conservative religious practice and argues that "it is important not to infuriate influential public leaders, particularly the community religious leaders, mosques' preachers, mosques' imams, . . . and Islamic leaders in the tribal areas." Abu Risha favors active dialogue with religious leadership and institutions. He believes the influence religious figures and institutions have on Afghan tribal leaders warrants engagement with them.

Indeed, Abu Risha believes that an Afghan Awakening should be as politically inclusive as possible. He argues that, as a general rule, to do battle against Afghan parties "will cost the military more money than to include these political parties in the process." He recognizes, however, that there are limits to inclusion and writes that NATO forces should combat parties that "fight the American project."

To facilitate an Afghan Awakening, Abu Risha makes a concrete offer to U.S. and NATO forces. In his memorandum, he proposes sending a delegation of three to five Iraqi Awakening leaders to Afghanistan "to explain and clarify the essential requirements to implement and succeed in the experiment." He suggests having these Iraqis "participate in organizing different conferences in Afghanistan to share the ideology and the success" of Iraq's Awakening.

It will be interesting to see which of these ideas the United States pursues. While there are no guarantees that an Awakening strategy will work in Afghanistan, there are precious few alternatives. ♦

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Caroline, We Hardly Knew Ye

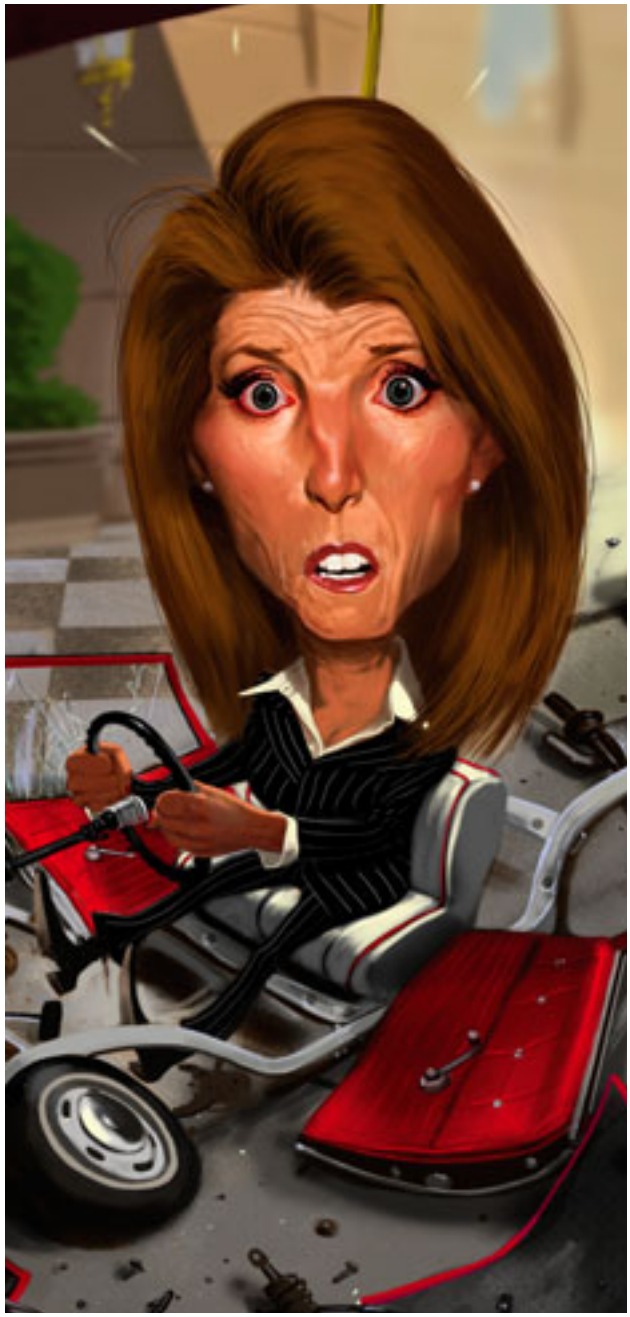
Is this the end of the line for the Kennedy dynasty?

By Noemie Emery

Political dynasties die in different ways, and the ends are not pretty. The Adamses eased themselves out by degrees, becoming more self-absorbed and less consequential over four generations. Theodore Roosevelt's oldest son Ted made an effort to follow his father, but was displaced early on by his fifth cousin Franklin and sank into a bitterness that was relieved only when he returned to his first love, the Army, and died a great hero in the Second World War. His oldest son, as unsuited as he was for politics, was wooed in his turn by his state's Republican party but bowed out when he discovered campaigns made him sick. Would this had happened to three of the sons of Franklin and Eleanor, who used public life to disparage their parents, becoming in the end such colossal embarrassments that no Roosevelt has since held high public office. But nothing can match what the Kennedys did over eight weeks this winter, when they torpedoed what may be their last hope for a comeback in a mishandled effort to regain their lost power.

Before it occurred, the family seemed poised on the brink of a moderate comeback, after several decades of scandals and loss. The diagnosis in May of Ted Kennedy's cancer brought him the world's sympathy. He and niece Caroline made timely endorsements of Barack Obama, which helped his campaign at a critical moment and brought them close to the inner circle of a popular White House for the first time in years. Caroline, who had been slowly edging her way into public involvement, seemed in line for a role of her own that would extend her and her family's presence. But then Obama picked Hillary Clinton to serve in his cabinet, opening up her seat in the Senate, the seat held years ago by Robert F. Kennedy.

The open seat came at a critical moment, when the rising prominence of Caroline Kennedy—the family's



THOMAS FLUHARTY

Noemie Emery, a Weekly Standard *contributing editor, is the author of* Great Expectations: The Troubled Lives of Political Families.

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most respected and popular member—her uncle's mortality, and the failure of the third generation to produce his successor, converged. Kennedys had been in the Senate since 1953, when Caroline's father arrived in that body; his two younger brothers had also been senators; between Bobby's election in 1964 and 1968 when he was murdered there had been two Senators Kennedy; Ted had been in the Senate since he was 30, a span of 46 years. At the same time, the failure to launch of the third generation, at least in electoral politics, took on a new importance: Where there once seemed an embarrassing richness of possible candidates, no heir apparent ever emerged. Caroline's brother John Kennedy Jr. was of two minds when it came to the family business and died in a plane crash. Caroline's cousin Kathleen Kennedy Townsend failed in her bid to become Maryland's governor. Caroline's cousin Joe dropped his bid to be governor of Massachusetts and then dropped out of politics, following scandals around his first marriage, and worse ones surrounding a brother who died in an accident. Other cousins lost primaries, or failed to get to them. Cousin Maria was a governor's wife, but the governor was a Republican. Her cousin Kerry married Andrew Cuomo, another young dynast, but the marriage blew up in a nasty divorce. Ted's son Patrick had a seat in the House, but he was not someone to make the public's heart flutter. Other young Kennedys, who had lives of their own, showed no interest in leaving them for the meat-grinder of political service, of which they had already seen rather too much.

Senator John F. Kennedy and daughter Caroline, 1960

GETTY

No one had thought much before of a candidate Caroline, but her sudden emergence at just the right moment appeared to have been the perfect solution to the family shortage of heirs. She was not a carpetbagger, she had lived in New York since she was seven. She came from the president's family—the Royal Line of the Kennedys—and was the sole survivor of the JFK nuclear family. She was the daughter of the country's most stunning and tragic First Lady. She was scandal-free and living a life of public good works and of private discretion. She was a friend of the president, a friend of the city's billionaire mayor, and a friend of most of the city's richest and most powerful people.

She had never campaigned for herself, and nobody knew if she could, but the appointment itself would be made by the governor, and the mayor, the president, and her uncle the senator would surely prevail upon him. She was the one non-controversial family member, beloved by the public since she was a small child; the one who faithfully tended the family legacy. How just that she should ascend to the body her father had served in, in the seat once held by her uncle, there to sit alongside her surviving uncle in his final political battle and carry on for him when he passed from the scene. The torch would be passed to the new generation, in a most unforeseen but most logical manner. Nothing could go wrong with this inspired scenario. But then everything did.

Caroline Kennedy is one of the few Americans who has been famous almost from infancy. The most important events of her life took place before she was six. Born in 1957, as her father was gearing up his campaign for the presidency, she was absorbed at once into the publicity machine that surrounded it. When she was two, he was elected, and she became a worldwide celebrity. Days before her sixth birthday her father was murdered, and she became a symbol of mourning, forever connected to one of the most traumatic events of the age. There she is, riding her pony on the lawn of the White House. There she is, in the Oval Office, dancing with her young brother. There she is, in a boat with her father, their heads close together. There she is, with her hand on his shoulder, watching the Black Watch regiment perform on the lawn of the White House, days before he flies off to Dallas. There she is, on the lap of her uncle, looking forlorn and unhappy.

Before she was grown, she had led a rich and full life as a repository of emotions too heavy and varied for anyone's comfort, and that soon outdistanced in significance

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anything that she would do later in her life. She married an artist, but her mother married a president (and a billionaire, but that is a whole other story). She had the public life of an educated and engaged private citizen; her father and uncles were figures in history. Her life had an even line on one level; her mother's huge sweep from first lady to tragic widow, to trophy wife, to editor, of which only the last ever approximated a normal existence.

Sitting on boards of institutions named for her family, giving awards in the name of her family, editing books based on her parents' writing and interests, she had the identity of an inheritor, and as an inheritor, the gap between her accomplishments and her position is large. On her own, she might have attended conventions, not spoken at them; gone to readings by authors, not given them; thrown a fundraiser or two for Barack Obama, not campaigned with him, or become one of his friends. On her own, she would not have been considered by anyone as an appointee to the Senate, but it was her identity as a Kennedy heir that made her valuable to family members most interested in extending their line: They wanted her back story and her standing as the rare Kennedy who was both scandal free and (more or less) above politics to stir public sentiment, quell opposition, and make it difficult for a Democratic governor in a Democratic state in which her uncle had served at the time of his murder to reject her appointment.

She is one of the few Americans who has been famous almost from infancy. Days before her sixth birthday her father was murdered, and she became a symbol of mourning.

The evidence seems to suggest that this was not her idea, and that she was ambivalent, but that she finally succumbed to the burden of family duty. On December 3, she called Governor David Paterson expressing her interest in becoming the senator, and the game was on.

For those who remembered the girl with the pony, the extremely high concept had its intended effect. "For Americans of a certain age, who've mostly seen Kennedy in mourning, she's a reminder of a golden time in politics," wrote Bloomberg's Margaret Carlson. The *Washington Post*'s Ruth Marcus called her "our tragic national princess" and said of her candidacy, "My head says no, on balance. My heart says yes! Yes!" But others of a more populist frame of mind thought less of the little girl on the pony than of the Park Avenue heiress who had never known struggle trying to muscle her way to the top. "Caroline Kennedy would like to be a Senator. I don't blame her. So would I!" Katha Pollitt wrote in the *Nation*. "Especially if Governor Paterson could just waft me into office, and I didn't have to, um, you know, campaign." If Marcus saw this as a fairy tale come true for America's princess, others saw a toxic combination of very high powered money and muscle, masked by an effort to play on the family tragedies for all their political worth. "The forces behind Caroline . . . are too powerful and too well-heeled to be resisted," said Joel Kotkin. In the *New York Post*, Fred Dicker warned Paterson, "Let's just say there'll be hell to pay from Uncle Teddy, Cousin Robert Jr., and a dozen other Kennedy family members . . . if you end up picking someone other than their current favorite to carry on the Camelot dream."

Caroline's candidacy enraged the dozen or more New York politicians who saw themselves as more than well-qualified for the job that she wanted, and mocked her as a know-nothing dilettante trying to trade on the family name; it became a nightmare in the life of the governor, who had been tempted to pick state attorney general Andrew Cuomo, son of the former governor, to get him out of the way as a possible rival for reelection. Now he had to choose between enraging the Kennedys (and Mayor Bloomberg) and enraging the Cuomos. As Dicker warned Paterson, "If you don't offer [Cuomo] the Senate job, you'll have delivered a major public humiliation to New York's only statewide elected state official. . . . Not a good thing to do for a hard-driving guy who rides a Harley, hunts with a shotgun . . . and would like to follow in the footsteps of a father named Mario."

As if to rub in all the more what it was she was doing, Caroline used as a principal spokesman her cousin Kerry, ex-wife of Andrew Cuomo, who had blown up the marriage five years earlier when she had an affair with one of his friends.

Caroline might have pulled all this off if she had charmed the press and the public, or wowed them with a dazzling display of depth on the issues. Instead, she bombed. She ventured upstate where she greeted the locals with no warmth and no interest, released stale written statements of liberal boilerplate, and gave disastrous interviews so vapid that her *ums* and *you knows* were replayed and mocked on the Internet. Her poll numbers tanked, and surveys showed her sinking behind her ex-cousin-in-law as the popular choice to replace Hillary Clinton. It was at this point that the governor seems to have panicked, to have backtracked on his previous semi-endorsement, and to have been alienated by the ham-handed pressure coming from Caroline's friends. Refusing to say if she was or was not the front-runner, the governor put off his decision until after Clinton resigned from the Senate, perhaps hoping Caroline would drop out under the blitz of derision. It

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was still up in the air when the Kennedys and the governor went to the inauguration in Washington. It was the following day that all hell would break loose.

The precise details of what went on in what sequence may never be known in this lifetime, but the outlines of what happened were these: On Wednesday afternoon, January 21, Caroline Kennedy called Paterson saying she was "overwhelmed" by the process, leading to rumors she was thinking of quitting. At eleven that night, she called him again, saying that she was still in contention. At 12:07 A.M., without calling the governor, she issued an email to the press saying that she was out. She cited unspecified "personal reasons" that were rumored to be (1) objections from one of her children; (2) objections from her husband, who was said to be unwilling to move with her to Washington; and (3) concerns over the health of her uncle, who collapsed with a seizure at the lunch at the Capitol following the inauguration and had been hospitalized overnight. For his part, her uncle was said to have been "enraged" at having his illness used as a reason. "It looks horrible," *Time* quoted a former aide to the senator. "It makes him look like he is at death's door."

Kerry Kennedy and New York governor David Paterson

NEWSCOM

Immediately, the Kennedy and Paterson forces began trashing each other, and by Thursday, when Paterson announced the appointment of Representative Kirsten Gillibrand, a moderate Democrat from upstate New York without any ties to the factions or dynasties, everyone in the state was at odds. The Clintons, who resented Caroline's embrace of Obama and didn't want her taking Hillary's place in the Senate, were enraged at the Kennedys; the Kennedys and Cuomos were still more enraged at each other, and all were enraged at the governor, who had been wounded by the appointment debacle and feared a primary challenge (perhaps from Andrew Cuomo) in 2010. Everyone was damaged (except Gillibrand), but the most wounded were the Kennedys, who had lost everything they had tried to preserve or acquire: the Senate seat and a new lease on power, their age-old reputation for ruthlessness and competence, their place in the state vis-à-vis the Cuomos and Clintons, and, most of all, the reputation of Caroline, their last pristine asset, the untouched and untouchable princess of Camelot, who had been brought crashing down to earth.

In retrospect, the episode looks like an accident waiting to happen, based on a fatal misreading of people and things. They tried to run a woman whose mystique lay in her above-the-fray distance from politics, without realizing that being *in* politics would quickly destroy her appeal and her image. They tried to hide the real reason they wanted the seat—to extend the family's power and presence when Ted left the Senate—without seeing that no other reason seemed logical. They misunderstood the resistance they would face from the dozen or so other candidates, who refused to go quietly and were the first to open up the line of questions about her experience and competence that punched through the aura. In her prior appearances, Caroline had always been helpful to people by raising money or lending prestige to their causes, while threatening no one. Now, she threatened the careers of rabidly ambitious people, who weren't about to be shouldered aside by an icon, no matter how tragic. There was a reason her mother had kept herself out of campaigns.

They misunderstood, too, the way that their family was viewed by the public, even by Democrats, and how much its image had changed. Locked in a cocoon with their friends and retainers, the Kennedys failed to see how events had eaten away at the mystique of the family, how much PT-109 had been neutralized by Chappaquiddick; Jackie in black by Kerry Kennedy Cuomo and the boyfriend who played polo; and Jack and Bobby by Michael Kennedy and William Kennedy Smith. Underlying the Kennedys' sense of entitlement, always much deeper than that of most other dynasties, was the unspoken belief that reparations were due them, that the tragically truncated lives and careers of Jack and of Bobby ought to be paid back to them in preferential treatment to other family members. This was what lay behind the restoration fantasies that rose up around Ted

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Kennedy and then around John F. Kennedy Jr. (though the latter, to his credit, did not encourage them), and this—that she would serve in the Senate, like her father and uncles—was the reason for Caroline's "run." Ruth Marcus admitted quite freely that she was pulling not for the Park Avenue matron but for the little girl on the pony, who would then have a job just like Dad's.

Then there was the princess herself. The argument was made that Caroline understood politics, having come from such a political family, but this was not really the case. Through no choice of her own she had been an icon from childhood, after the death of her father a tragic one, and the lives of politicians and icons of tragedy can frequently be poles apart. Politicians seek, icons are sought after. Politicians covet approval, icons confer it. Politicians explain themselves, icons are beyond such indignity. Politicians do things to justify their existence, icons just are. What Caroline does has always been secondary to her simple existence, which, for most people, is more than sufficient. "She has no trouble attracting crowds. They're all adoring," as Margaret Carlson put it. "She doesn't have to say much. Just being there is enough."

Caroline used as a principal spokesman her cousin Kerry, ex-wife of Andrew Cuomo, who had blown up the marriage five years earlier when she had an affair with one of his friends.

"No one is ever going to be the one to get off the phone with Caroline," a friend of hers told a *New Yorker* reporter. If she needs something from people, they line up to help. "While she was campaigning for Obama, she was in control of her time," ran the *New Yorker* account. "She wasn't required to show up anywhere or do anything in particular: Any amount of time she gave him was a gift for which he was grateful." That people have always been grateful—even the president—is part of the problem. The term often used by her friends is that she "offered herself" for the Senate seat. But it is volunteers who "offer" themselves to a cause or a movement, while politicians wage war for their turf. Caroline's life and experience taught her to see herself as a resource to be doled out in small doses to worthy institutions and people, and she offered to lend herself to the United States Senate in much the same spirit that her mother had lent herself to the battle to keep Grand Central Station from being destroyed. Her problem was that the Senate is not the Municipal Art Society, politics is more of a zero-sum game than landmark preservation, and a host of ambitious politicians were not about to let her upend their own plans.

The Kennedys seem to have thought that her status as "our tragic national princess" would allow her to avoid the clamor that would have ensued if they put forth one of the less revered and more controversial cousins. Instead, she was dragged down to their level, and the wall of protection around her collapsed. "In less than two months, Kennedy . . . was transformed from a beloved, if elusive, national icon into a laughingstock in the New York media," as the *Washington Post*'s Anne Kornblut tells us. "A series of tense media appearances and an unusually aggressive behind-the-scenes lobbying campaign by New York power brokers on her behalf have helped damage Kennedy's once unimpeachable, above-the-fray image," wrote *Time*'s Karen Tumulty, adding that those close to her were appalled at the campaign and its outcome. As one of them put it, "Everything that was special about her got stripped away."

The irony is that if the Kennedys had just been a little less greedy, they would have found themselves riding a boomlet of sorts. In 2004, the *Boston Globe* ran a story about how Ted had embraced John Kerry in hopes of ending his career with a friend in the White House, of seeing the view from the Truman balcony, as he had when his brother was president. He failed in that effort, but with Obama he now has his wish. As for Caroline, she might have been named to a board or commission that dealt with the arts or with children or even the Peace Corps, once run by a non-Kennedy uncle. That would have been seen as wholly appropriate; a link with her father would have been forged and a glow of good will would have settled on both Caroline and Uncle Ted.

Instead, both have been diminished and battered, and they are caught in a quagmire that will still be ongoing after the victorious troops have returned from Iraq. They are in a war-to-end-wars with the governor, their relations with the Clintons and Cuomos are worse than ever, and the tong wars of New York Democrats may give the governorship and/or the Senate seat in 2010 to the Republicans, in which case they will be blamed. The various feuds will keep the story alive and memories fresh up to and beyond the midterm elections. Even if the Kennedys bring the governor down, which may not be difficult, they will still be losers, as the fight will only remind people of their dire mismanagement, their arrogance, and Caroline's *you knows* and *ums*. Already, a Quinnipiac University poll released January 26 says that New Yorkers believe that "Caroline Kennedy and her aides are more to blame than Governor David Patterson and his team for the controversy surrounding New York's Senate seat" by a ratio of 49 to 15. Seldom has a single political mistake done so much harm to the people who made it. Sic transit gloria Kennedy. And maybe this time for good. ♦

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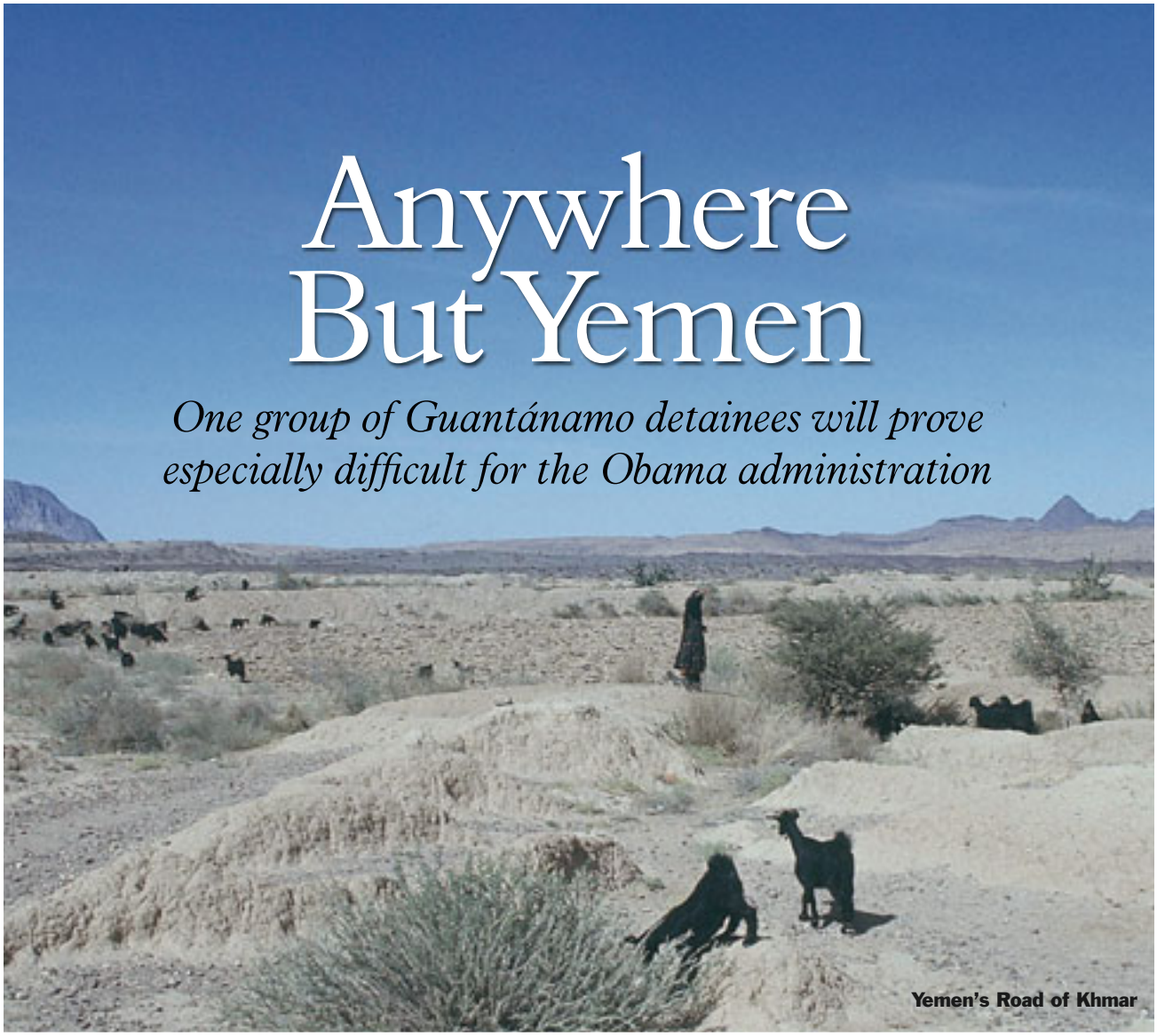
Anywhere But Yemen

One group of Guantánamo detainees will prove especially difficult for the Obama administration



Yemen's Road of Khmar

GETTY

By Stephen F. Hayes & Thomas Joscelyn

On January 22, 2009, two days after Barack Obama took the oath of office, the new president issued an executive order requiring that the detainee facility at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, be closed in one year. With cameras capturing the president affixing his signature to the document, Obama said the change would return the United States to the "moral high ground" and "restore the standards of due process and the core constitutional values that have made this country great even in the midst of war, even in dealing with terrorism." In a separate executive order, the new president established a task force to lead a broad review of U.S. detention policy and to provide him "with information in terms of how we are able to deal [with] the disposition of some of the detainees that may be currently in Guantánamo that we cannot transfer to other countries, who could pose a serious danger to the United States."

While Obama was deliberately vague about what would happen to the approximately 248 detainees currently held at Guantánamo Bay, his administration's policy quickly began to take shape halfway around the world. Some one hundred of the remaining Guantánamo detainees are from Yemen, the ancestral home of Osama bin Laden. And in comments published the day Obama issued his executive orders, the U.S. ambassador to Yemen said that he hoped a "majority" of the Yemeni detainees would be allowed to return home to "make a future for themselves here."

"Certainly we would like to be able to bring them back to Yemen and have them integrate themselves back into their own society with their families," Ambassador Stephen Seche told America.gov, a State Department website. Although he acknowledged some "inherent risks" in returning the alleged terrorists to the general population, Seche

Stephen F. Hayes, a senior writer at The Weekly Standard, *is the author of* Cheney: The Untold Story of America's Most Powerful and Controversial Vice President. *Thomas Joscelyn is the senior editor of the website Long War Journal.*

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suggested that only a few of the detainees present real problems. "Except in the case perhaps of some very hardcore elements, we believe that the majority of these detainees can be put productively into a . . . reintegration program with the goal over time of enabling them to find a way back into Yemeni society without posing a security risk."

Two days later, Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh went further. In an appearance at a security conference in Sana'a, Saleh announced that Yemen had established a reintegration program and that virtually all of the Yemeni detainees would be sent home within three months. "Now, within 60-90 days, 94 Yemeni detainees will be here among us," he announced.

Is Saleh correct? Was Ambassador Seche speaking for the State Department and, more broadly, for the Obama administration? We put those questions to a spokesman for Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. The spokesman, who declined to be identified in print, cautioned that the Obama administration's review of Guantánamo detainees was ongoing and that it was too early to know precisely what steps that process would recommend. Saleh's announcement, he said, was premature. But the spokesman nonetheless indicated that Ambassador Seche's comments reflect administration policy.

> Ambassador Seche's comments that you referred to lay out very well the U.S. government position on the situation of the Yemeni detainees at Guantánamo. . . . As he noted, the U.S. government has made clear its decision to close the Guantánamo Bay facility as soon as practicable but no later than one year from January 22, 2009.

Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh

ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Bush administration spent years debating the best way to handle the Yemeni detainees. Reports vary as to precisely how many Yemenis are still at Guantánamo. The online database of detainees created by the *New York Times* indicates that there are 95 Yemenis currently being held, in addition to 9/11 conspirator Ramzi Binalshibh and senior al Qaeda operations planner Walid bin Attash. A handful of them—like Binalshibh and Attash—are high-value detainees and will not be released. At the other end of the spectrum are a small number of Yemeni detainees who were determined to be good candidates for transfer or release—detainees who are not believed to pose a future risk to the United States. The problem is in the middle. The vast majority of Yemenis in Guantánamo have strong ties to al Qaeda or a history of active involvement in terrorism. Some members of this group were candidates for a reintegration program in Saudi Arabia that U.S. officials point to as a success despite the fact that several graduates have returned to a life of terror. But Saleh said at the security conference that his government "refuse[d] the offer to release the Yemenis to Saudi Arabia for rehabilitation." In any case, according to a senior Bush administration involved in detainee discussions, transferring a "majority" of the Yemeni detainees directly back to Yemen was "inconceivable."

One Bush administration official cautioned against reading too much into Seche's comments, suggesting he was simply articulating the long-term solution to an exceedingly difficult problem and laying out an objective that was, to some extent, shared by the Bush administration. Others, though, were alarmed at what they regard as a significant policy shift and a dangerous retreat from counterterrorism policies that were indisputably effective.

The Bush administration worked hard to reduce the number of detainees held at Guantánamo Bay—from 750 to 248—and those that remain are dedicated jihadists. "The easiest cases have been dealt with a long time ago," notes Charles "Cully" Stimson, former deputy assistant secretary of defense for detainee affairs and now a senior legal fellow at the Heritage Foundation. "They were harder in 2005, and then harder in 2006 when I was in office. These are even harder—some of the hardest. There is no risk-free transfer from Gitmo, in my opinion."

Another top Bush administration official puts it more starkly. "Releasing hardcore terrorists back to the Yemenis will almost certainly guarantee that we will have to kill them or capture them all over again."

This is because there are two obvious problems with releasing the Yemeni detainees from Guantánamo: the detainees and Yemen.

Like Saudi Arabia, its neighbor to the north, Yemen is a hotbed of Islamic extremism and home to an entrenched terrorist network. Osama bin Laden has deep familial and tribal roots in Yemen, and Yemenis form the core of his personal bodyguard. Bin Laden's guards swear an oath of personal loyalty similar to the one that the Prophet Mohammed required from his followers. More than a dozen of the Yemenis currently detained at Guantá-

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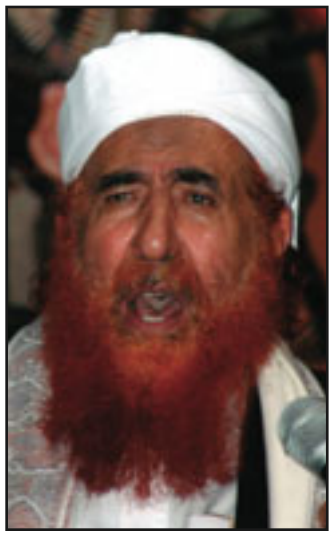
namo are alleged to have been bodyguards for the world's most infamous terrorist.

The factions bin Laden draws support from are not at the margin of Yemeni society. They are among President Saleh's most powerful backers. One of Yemen's leading clerics is Abdul Majid al-Zindani. The head of the Islah party, Zindani has backed President Saleh at crucial times during his career, and Saleh has consistently returned the favor by supporting some of the most radical elements of Yemeni society. Saleh has even defied U.S. pressure to contain or deport Zindani, who has been designated a terrorist supporter under Executive Order 13224.

Zindani received this designation because he is a longtime personal friend of Osama bin Laden. One current Yemeni detainee at Guantánamo, Abdul Rahman Mohammed Saleh Naser, was allegedly recruited by Zindani to fight on behalf of al Qaeda in Afghanistan. Several other Yemeni detainees are alleged to have ties to, or been members of, Zindani's Islah party.



After the September 11 attacks, George W. Bush asked nations around the world to respond to a simple question: Are you with us or with the terrorists? Yemen's answer seems to have been *Yes*. When the Bush administration requested help from President Saleh's government, Yemen did provide some limited tactical assistance. But Saleh's ties to jihadists are deep and longstanding.

Saleh's government began working with veterans of the jihad against the Soviet Union after their return from Afghanistan in the early 1990s. His government even cooperates, at times, with al Qaeda against their common foes, including Shiite tribes and other forces who oppose Saleh's government. This cooperation generally runs counter to U.S. interests. For example, press reports have consistently pointed to the role that Saleh and his extended family have played in supporting the Iraqi insurgency. "Saleh's administration supports the Iraqi insurgency in public statements and other ways," Jane Novak, an expert on Yemen who runs the website Armiesofliberation.com, told us. Numerous Yemeni terrorists have turned up in Iraq.

When abroad, Saleh presents himself as doing what he can to fight terrorism. But the U.S. government—or important parts of it, at least—does not believe him. Unclassified documents released from Guantánamo note that his regime is not a true ally: "Yemen is not a nation supporting the Global War on Terrorism," states one report. While Saleh cooperates with or co-opts the jihadist forces he claims to be fighting, he is ever mindful that the extremists could turn against his regime. Saleh's unstated policy towards the Islamists has been: Wage jihad, just not against my government. To this end, the Yemeni government has, tacitly or otherwise, facilitated the movement of jihadists around the globe. Consider the story of Abdul al Salam al Hilal, a Yemeni currently detained at Guantánamo.

Al Hilal worked for the Political Security Organization (PSO), which is an intelligence agency that reports directly to President Saleh. The PSO operated an official government "deportation" operation, in which veteran mujahedeen were relocated. The U.S. government says al Hilal has admitted that he was tasked with keeping tabs on al Qaeda operatives for Saleh's government. The U.S. government also charges, however, that al Hilal was really an al Qaeda member who used his position of authority to assist his fellow terrorists.

Abdul Majid al-Zindani is one of Saleh's crucial supporters. He is a longtime personal friend of Osama bin Laden and a terrorist supporter, according to the U.S. government.

According to the U.S. government, al Hilal facilitated the movement of terrorists around the globe and admits that he and the deputy chief of the PSO were paid "to release extremists held in Yemeni prisons." Some of the terrorists the U.S. government claims al Hilal worked to release are well-connected al Qaeda associates. One of them is Muhammad Shawqi al-Islambuli, a high-ranking member of the Egyptian al-Gama'at al-Islamiyya (IG) terrorist organization, which has long been affiliated with al Qaeda. (His brother Khalid assassinated Egyptian president Anwar Sadat on October 6, 1981. The government's files note that Muhammad al-Islambuli "has been involved in terrorist training in Afghanistan and Pakistan and served as [a] liaison between the IG and Osama bin Laden.")

During the summer of 2000, al Hilal visited the Islamic Cultural Institute in Milan. Following the September 11 attacks, Italy closed down the institute, primarily because it housed an al Qaeda facilitation network that provided forged passports and other assistance to al Qaeda operatives traveling to and from Afghanistan. Italian authorities had been watching the institute for some time. During one wire-

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tap session, recorded before the 9/11 attacks, they captured a conversation between al Hilal and a senior Egyptian al Qaeda member. The contents are chilling.

> Well, I am studying airplanes! If it is God's will, I hope to bring you a window or a piece of a plane next time I see you. . . . We are focusing on the air alone. . . . It is something terrifying, something that moves from south to north and from east to west: the man who devised the program is a lunatic, but he is a genius. It will leave them stunned. . . . We can fight any force using candles and planes. They will not be able to halt us, not even with their heaviest weapons. We just have to strike at them, and hold our heads high. Remember, the danger at the airports. If it comes off, it will be reported in all the world's papers. The Americans have come into Europe to weaken us, but our target is now the sky.

In 2002, al Hilal was lured to Egypt on the pretext of doing business and captured by the Egyptian authorities. He was eventually transferred to U.S. custody and Guantánamo.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

It is not clear what the Obama administration will do with al Hilal. But his story exposes the fundamental duplicity that defines the Yemeni government's behavior. On the one hand, al Hilal was working with Saleh's government to make sure the jihadist forces that thrive in Yemen did not turn against the government. On the other hand, the U.S. government believes al Hilal was exporting terrorism around the globe and had foreknowledge of the September 11 attacks.

The Yemeni government apparently had a similar relationship with Jamal al-Badawi, one of the terrorists behind the USS *Cole* bombing in Aden. Saleh's government freed al-Badawi from jail in October 2007. According to the *New York Times*, the Yemeni government hoped to use al-Badawi to expose the terror network's designs. Al-Badawi was rearrested after the United States insisted that he still posed a threat, even if the Yemeni government thought it could track him. It is not clear whether al-Badawi remains in custody.

Sending detainees back to Yemen carries risks far greater than returning them to many other countries. And this is without even considering the character of the detainees themselves.

Last year, The Weekly Standard performed a six-month study of the files released by the Department of Defense on 242 of the remaining Guantánamo detainees. (See "Clear and Present Danger" by Thomas Joscelyn, December 1, 2008.) We identified four red flags that the Obama administration should look for in assessing whether a detainee might be considered for release. Using the same tests, we have looked again directly at the 95 Yemenis listed in the *New York Times* online database of Guantánamo detainees.

The first red flag we suggested was evidence that a detainee had been recruited by a terror network. For the better part of three decades, sheikhs such as Zindani and other professional recruiters have indoctrinated impressionable Yemenis in the ways of jihad. Recruitment takes place at the radical mosques and schools that dot the Yemeni landscape. The Taliban and al Qaeda rely on the recruiting network to replenish their ranks. The recruiters frequently make travel arrangements, paying for recruits' trips and suggesting common routes to Afghanistan (mostly through Pakistan and Iran) and elsewhere. Yemeni sheikhs, like their Saudi counterparts, support al Qaeda's recruitment by giving fiery sermons and issuing fatwas calling for Muslims to support the jihad in Afghanistan and Iraq against the United States, just as they called earlier for jihad against the Soviets and then the Northern Alliance.

Jamal al-Badawi helped organize the attack on the USS 'Cole' in Aden. The Yemenis freed him in October 2007, and only rearrested him after the United States insisted he remained a terror threat.

According to the U.S. government's unclassified files, most of the Yemenis remaining at Guantánamo were sent to the war zones of Afghanistan, Chechnya, Bosnia, and elsewhere by the Yemeni recruiting network. Of the 95 Yemenis identified by the *Times* as current detainees, the government alleges that 65 of them (68 percent) were connected to the jihadist recruiting network. This includes both recruiters and those recruited or inspired by the network to wage jihad. (It does not include detainees who decided on their own to wage jihad or were inspired by other means, including al Qaeda's propaganda.)

Assuming that America could even trust the Yemeni government, any attempt to deprogram the former Guantánamo detainees will be exceedingly difficult. The Yemeni government has been operating a rehabilitation program, but it has proved largely ineffective. The Yemeni program

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"was not even a shadow" of the Saudi one, according to a counterterrorism official. In January 2008, Mustafa Alani of the Gulf Research Centre told the BBC News that some 70 percent of the Yemenis who had gone through the existing rehabilitation program had been rearrested on terrorism-related charges. Nor is it clear what happened to them after they were rearrested; many may have simply been put back into circulation elsewhere.

Once a man is corrupted by al Qaeda's recruiters, it can be difficult for him to come back. Consider the case of Abd al Rahman al Zahri, a Yemeni currently detained at Guantánamo. During their hearings at Guantánamo, many detainees proclaim their innocence. (Because they are seeking freedom, they have every incentive to do so.) But some, like al Zahri, do not hide their agenda. Al Zahri seethed with anger against America and defiantly explained:

> I didn't come here to defend myself. I have no need for that because I didn't commit any crime. I have the right to come. Regarding what the United States has said, I do pose a threat to the United States and its allies. I admit to you it is my honor to be an enemy of the United States. I'm a Muslim jihadist and I'm defending my religion and my family . . . against the infidel, the United States and its allies until all the property of the Muslims will come back to them. God praises the Muslim people and all the people of Islam. I will never return or come back from jihad.

While not all detainees may be as blunt as al Zahri, there are many signs to look for in evaluating the depth of their ideological commitment. Some drafted martyrdom letters. Others signed up for martyrdom missions. And some, like Osama bin Laden's bodyguards, swore an oath of loyalty that binds them until death.

The second red flag is an association with Islamist guesthouses. The word "guesthouse" sounds innocuous, but not just anyone can gain admittance. On their way to join the jihad, most Yemeni recruits would have stayed in guesthouses, whose operators usually required that a known al Qaeda or Taliban member vouch for anyone wishing to stay there. New residents are typically required to turn in their passports and other identification papers, sometimes receiving a new identity, before being shuttled off to a training facility or the front lines. The guesthouses provide rudimentary religious and weapons training and act as staging facilities where jihadist fighters regroup between missions.

Our review found that at least 70 of the 95 Yemeni detainees (74 percent) are alleged to have either operated or stayed in al Qaeda or Taliban guesthouses in Pakistan, Afghanistan, or Iran. This figure includes 15 Yemenis who were captured in the raids that netted senior al Qaeda operatives Abu Zubaydah and Ramzi Binalshibh.

These raids generated a treasure trove of information. For example, at the time he was captured, Binalshibh was plotting an encore to the 9/11 attacks that included an attack on London's Heathrow airport and other targets. The guesthouses where Binalshibh and his fellow Yemenis were holed up contained two computers loaded with details of his plans. They contained a "flight simulator and flight navigation maps," as well as specific information on "United States military facilities and the layout of the exterior and interior views of various United States Navy ships." In addition, the computers contained "several files that discussed kidnapping, hijacking, smuggling money, weapons, ammunition, and lectures and essays on terrorist training, executions, assassinations, [guerrilla] warfare and United States Special Operations Forces."

Our third red flag is whether a detainee received training in one of the Taliban's or al Qaeda's many Afghan camps. The principal reason Yemeni jihadists traveled to Afghanistan was to receive military-style training. The Taliban's pre-9/11 Afghanistan was a hub for terrorist training, of course; its camps having turned out some 20,000 graduates in the 1990s. New recruits could learn everything from basic military skills to more advanced techniques, such as how to construct a truck bomb and evade detection by Western intelligence agencies.

Our review found that at least 70 of the 95 Yemenis (74 percent) identified by the *Times* as current detainees are alleged to be either trainers or trainees. (In a few instances, they took part in training outside of Afghanistan, in, for example, Bosnia, Chechnya, or Pakistan.) Al Qaeda used its training infrastructure to identify especially promising recruits, who would be tasked with the most sensitive missions, including attacks against the United States.

One such talented recruit is a Guantánamo detainee named Muhammad Ahmad Abdallah al Ansi. In Afghanistan he graduated from al Qaeda's beginner course into its elite training program. An unnamed "senior al Qaeda operative" cited in the U.S. government's unclassified files says that he then took al Ansi and others to Karachi two months before September 11, 2001, "to teach them English and American behaviors." The same senior al Qaeda operative identified al Ansi "as one of the martyrs who had been readied" for al Qaeda's "Southeast Asia hijacking plan." That plan was devised by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and initially intended to coincide with the 9/11 attacks. Because al Qaeda's senior leadership worried that the plot was becoming too complicated, the Southeast Asia hijacking plan was rescheduled as part of a second wave of attacks.

That second wave never happened in large part

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because the Bush administration and its allies captured the al Qaeda terrorists who were to be responsible for its execution, including high-value Guantánamo detainee Walid bin Attash. He made a trip to Malaysia in January 2000 to scope out airport security and to meet with some of the 9/11 plotters. Accompanying him on the trip, according to the U.S. government's unclassified files, was a fellow jihadist named Zuhail Abdo Anam Said al Sharabi. Al Sharabi is another Yemeni currently detained at Guantánamo.

The final red flag we suggested to the new administration was any direct evidence of participation in hostilities in Afghanistan or elsewhere. The Yemeni terror network has sent willing jihadists around the globe to commit acts of terror. Yemenis have fought on behalf of al Qaeda and its allies in Afghanistan, Chechnya, Bosnia, Iraq, and elsewhere.

NEWSCOM

Our new review found that at least 43 of the 95 Yemenis (45 percent) are alleged to have participated in these hostilities. The bulk of these fought on the frontlines in Afghanistan or directly supported those who did. But this count also includes detainees who were involved in terrorist attacks or were senior operational commanders in charge of deployed forces.

In sum, 94 of the 95 Yemeni detainees we studied in detail had at least one of the four red flags outlined above; 81 had two or more red flags. This methodology has its limits, of course, given the U.S. government's interest in potentially prosecuting these individuals and because much of the information about them remains classified. There are a variety of other factors the Obama administration will consider as it determines the fate of these Yemenis.

But the reality is simple: The overwhelming majority of the Yemenis currently detained at Guantánamo Bay are very dangerous individuals. Sending a majority of them back to Yemen so that they might "make a future for themselves" involves significant risks.

"Maybe the new administration thinks it's worth that risk in order to shut [Guantánamo] down and to defend our system of values," says one Bush administration counterterrorism official. "That's fine. But let's be honest about it."

And if we're honest about it, we'll understand that the risks of such an attack are not merely hypothetical. The U.S. embassy in Sana'a was bombed on September 17, 2008—ten civilians were killed, including one American. Al Qaeda in Yemen, now one of the strongest al Qaeda affiliates worldwide, executed the attack. The group's chief deputy, a Saudi named Said Ali al Shihri, passed through Guantánamo and Saudi Arabia's jihad rehabilitation program—the one even hawkish U.S. officials point to as a success. Last week, al Shihri turned up in a jihadist Internet video, joined by three other terrorists. One of them, Abu al-Hareth Muhammad al-Oufi, was also released from detention at Guantánamo Bay and graduated from the Saudi reintegration program. In the video, the former detainees proudly proclaim that they are returning to the same jihad that landed them in the U.S. detention facility.

When Ramzi Binalshibh was captured, he was plotting al Qaeda's encore to the 9/11 attacks which included an attack on London's Heathrow airport.

Senator Christopher Bond, ranking Republican on the Senate Intelligence Committee, points to al Shihri as an example of the difficulties of reintegration. While Bond goes out of his way to empathize with the "difficult governing position" of the Yemeni president, he is deeply skeptical of any plans to ship a majority of Yemeni detainees back "unless and until Yemen has a proven and reliable program for rehabilitation."

And since President Obama started the one-year countdown on January 22, that's unlikely. "You're not going to have a credible Yemeni reintegration program in a year," says the Bush counterterrorism official.

One of President Obama's first official acts was to order Guantánamo closed. The executive order he signed called for his staff to find a way to close the facility in a manner that is "consistent with the national security and foreign policy interests of the United States." Repatriating large numbers of Yemenis to Saleh's duplicitous regime, which seems to be the new administration's position, is not consistent with that goal. ♦

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Great Scot

Robert Burns at 250: Dead at 37, he left 'an astonishingly varied, and vital body of work'

BY SARA LODGE

BETTMANN / CORBIS

Many countries have a national saint. Scotland can boast the distinction of also having a national sinner: His name is Robert Burns. Burns (1759-1796), the poet who penned tender lyrics such as "O my Luve's like a red, red rose," scorching satires on high-Calvinist hypocrisy such as "Holy Willie's Prayer," and dangerously democratic songs such as "For a' that, and a' that," is also famous as a serial adulterer, a drinker, and a rogue.

Every year on January 25, Scots and their friends around the world celebrate Burns's birthday with Burns Suppers at which his poetry is recited, haggis (meat, onions, and oatmeal, boiled in a sheep's stomach lining) is eaten, and copious quantities of whiskey are consumed before all join hands to sing "Auld Lang Syne"—celebrating the importance of continuing friendship for old times' sake. This year, the 250th anniversary of Burns's birth, officially designated "Year of Homecoming" by the Scottish government, is an excuse for all those who feel Scottish at heart to turn their thoughts to the home country, and it sees the publication of a new biography of Burns by Robert Crawford, professor of Modern Scottish Literature at the University of St Andrews.

The Bard
Robert Burns, a Biography
by Robert Crawford
Princeton, 480 pp., $35

As its author acknowledges, a new biography of Burns might, on the face of it, seem to be "the world's most unnecessary book." Biographies of Burns are as plentiful as hangovers after Burns Suppers, and some of them are equally unrewarding. But this one is genuinely useful. Even-handed and earnest, it isn't the raciest version of Burns's high-octane career: Those who want a simplified story can look elsewhere. But *The Bard*, while approachable and concise, sets a new standard for scholarly readings of Burns's life.

It incorporates a range of valuable archival and contextual work that has been done on Burns in the last two

Sara Lodge, lecturer in English at the University of St Andrews, is the author of Thomas Hood and Nineteenth-Century Poetry *and* Jane Eyre: An Essential Guide to Criticism.

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decades to give a nuanced account of the complex combination of influences and ideas that shaped the poet. This biography digs into Burns's reading and writing, unpicks the subtle weave of his political and religious views, and reveals a Robert Burns who was a more regular churchgoer and a more moderate toper than some commentators have assumed, but also a more informed and incisive political and cultural radical.

Burns's life was a struggle. He was born in wartime, the first of seven children. His parents, tenant farmers, battled poor soil, harsh weather, and high rents. A local bank collapsed, with familiar knock-on effects throughout the Ayrshire community. Burns's father wore out his middle age plowing, harvesting, and threshing while fighting repossession orders. Burns, a poet of burly build, knew the sheer graft of rural labor in a way few other successful writers have ever done. He did indeed learn to rhyme at the plow's tail—composing verse in his head as he made lines in the landscape, and that deep contact between the lay and the land earths all his poetry in a felt reality.

He was not, however, "heaven-taught," as the novelist Henry Mackenzie famously supposed, but carefully educated by an ambitious father who, on a very slender income, was determined to give his sons the best possible means of self-improvement. Robert and his brother Gilbert were lucky, while wealthier contemporaries were enduring an education of Greek, Latin, and flogging, to be taught by an imaginative teenager, John Murdoch, who, when they were only seven or eight, was encouraging them to learn poems by heart, to translate poetry into natural prose, and to find synonyms for every word they encountered.

Vitally, Burns's upbringing was richly bicultural. He was fluent in English, a well-read wit who modeled his letter-writing on that of Alexander Pope and carried Milton about in his pocket. But his daily speech was Scots dialect, a language of vulgar guttural vigor.

When, in "Tam O'Shanter," Burns's marvelous narrative poem about an errant husband who joins a devilish dance and is pursued by witches on the way home from the pub, Tam's wife tells him that he's "a skellum / a blethering, blustering, drunken blellum," we hardly need to be told that she's calling him a big-mouthed barroom bum: The sound of the words is full of Tam's boozy boasts and her scolding sarcasm. Burns learned from English poets like William Shenstone and Oliver Goldsmith, but also the Scots tradition of Robert Fergusson, Allan Ramsay, and anonymous folk songs, which Burns recorded and rewrote. The knowing combination of those different vocabularies and different traditions produces the counterpoint of sophistication and simplicity, wild riskiness and neoclassical control that energizes Burns's voice.

Robert Burns in Central Park

GETTY IMAGES

Burns shaped his public and private persona, often using literary models. His wasn't a naïve career. Crawford's biography is at its best when he is showing how Burns builds on older models, turning Fergusson's use of the "Standard Habbie," a pithy conversational verse form, into what is now widely known as the "Burns stanza," or adapting a conventional English lyric, "One Fond Kiss," into the more urgent and emotionally fraught "Ae Fond Kiss."

Burns is sometimes accused of being a sentimental poet. Drawing on scholarship by Carol McGuirk and others, Crawford shows how being a "man of feeling"—the title of Henry Mackenzie's 1771 popular novel—was a state Burns cultivated and regarded positively, as did many contemporaries. Experiencing sudden and irrepressible emotion, friendship, and tears, love was, for Burns, a sign of humanity. Poetry could bring that out, standing against those forces in society that advocated repression.

Burns is a very funny poet. He was great company. When the publication of *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* (1786) made him an instant celebrity, he took the drawing-rooms of Edinburgh by storm. He was also depressive, restless, and sometimes very selfish. While his drinking may have been exaggerated, his womanizing has not. Behind every half-closed door of his life there is a pregnant housemaid. Burns belonged to an era of bucks who celebrated their f—. But his frank and free attitude to sex, while exploitative in its consequences, is ideologically of a piece with his other radical views. He celebrates the leveling power and vital joy of making love, and raises a laugh at the state's ineffectual attempts to keep it down.

Burns deliberately applied himself to fill the vacancy that existed for a national poet, in a Scotland still smarting from the loss of political independence after the Union of her Parliament with England's in 1707. He succeeded, very quickly, in becoming "Scotia's bard." He was given a job in the Excise Service, chasing smuggled goods; he married his most persistent girlfriend and embarked upon family life. But success was an itchy, two-sided garment. To a natural poacher, the more respectable life of a gamekeeper chafed. It was difficult to find time for song-collecting and poetry production while constantly on horseback seeking contraband. Crawford's account of the last years of Burns's short life often feels like an over-full diary. Burns's health wore out.

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When he died at 37, however, he left an astonishingly varied and vital body of work. The love songs have always been popular, as have poems such as "To a Mouse." Burns's bawdier and more directly political poetry, however, was avoided by Victorian editors. Some of it was published anonymously and has only recently been unearthed by modern scholars. This biography refocuses attention on Burns the radical. As Crawford points out, America, not Scotland, is the country first mentioned in Burns's poetry, in a poem sympathetic to the rebel colonies. In the wake of the French revolution, Burns took risks to express views consonant with the "liberty, equality, and fraternity" of the new republic. Crawford quotes new material from the journal of James Macdonald, one of Burns's last visitors, who referred to Burns as a "staunch republican." Burns's song "For a' that and a' that," anonymously circulated during the Napoleonic wars, has a revolutionary edge when one realizes that the word "brothers" in the last line is, in an earlier version, "equals":

Then let us pray that come it may,
As come it will for a' that,
That Sense and Worth, o'er a' the earth
Shall bear the gree, and a' that
For a' that, and a' that,
It's comin' yet for a' that,
That Man to Man the warld o'er,
Shall brothers be for a' that.

This song was sung at the opening of the new Scottish parliament in 1999. It's no accident that *The Bard*, celebrating a subversive, radical, and nationalist Burns, has been published in 2009 when the Scottish National party, which seeks Scottish independence, has for the first time a majority in the new parliament and a referendum on secession seems likely. Crawford's Burns is the independent national poet of a country looking the possibility of independent political nationhood squarely in the eye.

Even if that's not your view of Robert Burns, however, this biography is enlightening and entertaining, a good read in a gray month. Whether you follow it with haggis and whiskey is up to you. ♦

On the way to worship, 1959

LAMBERT

The Sacred Weekend

Remember the Sabbath day? To keep it holy was the norm. **BY CHRISTOPHER BENSON**

Stephen Miller lifts his title from a letter by Wallace Stevens. What makes Sunday "peculiar"? If we take our cue from the origin of the word—meaning "of one's own property"—what belongs to Sunday does not belong to any other day of the week. In the past it has claimed spatio-temporal uniqueness—the intersection of heaven and earth—set apart for religion, rest, and reflection. Miller's cultural history of Sunday observance in the Christian West becomes relevant reading because this day is now being subsumed by commercialization and secularization.

The Peculiar Life of Sundays
by Stephen Miller
Harvard, 320 pp., $27.95

The story he tells is from a postsecular viewpoint, neither for nor against the church. Instead, he explores the oddity of Sunday with a mixture of curiosity and nostalgia, much like a visitor who wanders into Chartres Cathedral and stares at the West Rose window, trying to make sense of its biblical narrative.

The Peculiar Life of Sundays is a stained-glass window of Sunday lives. The outer circle of the window is lapsed Christians like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Wallace Stevens; the middle circle is nonobservant Christians like

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John Ruskin and Robert Lowell; and the inner circle—most removed from our own experience—is observant Christians like George Herbert, Hannah More, and Jonathan Edwards. By recounting these Sunday lives, Miller reaches the center of the window: the human need for what the Jewish scholar Abraham Heschel describes as "a realm of time where the goal is not to have but to be, not to own but to give, not to control but to share, not to subdue but to be in accord."

Antiquity colors the window with its contrast between pagan veneration of the sun god and Christian veneration of the Son of God. When Constantine altered the Roman calendar by decreeing that Sunday, the "day of the Sun," should be a public holiday for sun-worshipers, Christians rested on what they called the "Lord's Day." During a transitional period, early Christians often fused Jesus with the sun god, naming him the Sun of Righteousness. Augustine and Boethius severed this fusion, arguing that worship of the sun god is idolatrous because God made and controls the sun.

Jews regarded the Sabbath as a celebration of the created world, whereas Christians regarded it as a celebration of the resurrected Jesus. Augustine moved the Sabbath from the seventh to the eighth day by noting that the command of circumcision and the event of the resurrection occurred on the eighth day. Thus, he redefined Sunday as the new Sabbath—evacuating its Jewish content.

When their pagan neighbors found Sunday diversion in "gladiatorial contests, obscene plays, and chariot races," Christians found delight in worship, prayer, almsgiving, confession of sins, and sexual abstinence. Miller claims the calendar is one of the reasons Christianity triumphed over paganism. The church transformed winter solstice into Christmas, "days that venerated pagan gods into days that venerated Christian martyrs," and *chronos* (clock time) into *kairos* (holy time). With the Christianization of time, Sunday persisted in the West as the "Lord's Day" for over a millennium, punctuated by spasmodic revivals of pagan thought.

Before the Reformation, the church inveighed against paganism; after the Reformation, Protestants inveighed against the Church of Rome as a variety of paganism. Miller focuses his account on Protestant Sundays in Great Britain and America, where sabbatarian debates prescribed and proscribed nearly every activity under the sun, occasionally to expel "the evils of popery" but mostly to promote sanctification over recreation.

Sabbatarians believed that the health of civilization depended on how it observed Sunday. Serving as associate justice of the Supreme Court from 1830 to 1861, John McLean asserted: "Where there is no Christian Sabbath, there is no Christian morality; and without this free institutions can not long be sustained." The force of sabbatarianism—faint to contemporary ears—preceded and outlasted the spirited debates over slavery and temperance, waning at the end of the 19th century when figures like John Stuart Mill argued that sabbatarian legislation was an "illegitimate interference with the rightful liberty of the individual."

While Americans continue to attend church in large numbers, especially compared with Europeans, the "Lord's Day" has become less a holy day and more a holiday, less a ritual and more a routine. Research from George Barna, a prominent marketing consultant to evangelical megachurches, predicts that "by the year 2010, 10 to 20 percent of Americans will derive all their spiritual input (and output) through the Internet." If private worship actually detracts from public worship, we should expect sabbatarianism redux, although this time it will not involve secular and religious persons, only religious persons who are inside and outside sanctuary walls.

For Miller, Sunday is not a window on eternity so much as a window on the psyche, revealing conditions that range from piety to pathology. Anti-Catholicism fueled John Northbrook's campaign against the "dung and filth of ydleness." Mirth motivated George Herbert's duties as a country parson. "Vain scruples" kept Samuel Johnson in bed. Sexual fantasies gripped James Boswell during church services. Longing for the sublime brought Thomas Gray to the mountaintop, where he perceived God closer than "under a roof of citrus-wood."

Enthusiasm drove Hannah More to skip the pleasures of "tea-visiting" for the instruction of Sunday school. Horror at the inanity of evangelicalism compelled John Ruskin to shock Christians by falsely claiming belief in the Greek gods. Gloom from his sabbatarian childhood led Edmund Gosse to sympathize with pantheism. "Vital piety" informed Jonathan Edwards's sermon that surmised an earthquake in New England was "a token of God's anger" against profaning the Sabbath. "Egotheism" propelled Ralph Waldo Emerson from the pulpit to the lectern because "every man makes his own religion, his own God." Purity animated the pagan sun-worship of Henry David Thoreau, who believed Christians were "infidels because they celebrate Sunday as the Lord's Day rather than the day of the sun."

The Peculiar Life of Sundays succeeds in designing a complex and fascinating stained-glass window with each Sunday life sensitively executed to avoid unfair judgments. Early in the book, the author expresses a hope: "A look at the transformation of Sunday in America may help us to have a more measured conversation about religion and society because we will see that churchgoing and non-churchgoing Americans have a good deal in common." By the end of the book, the reader may feel that Miller's window is romantic but not translucent enough to shed much light on what these two groups have in common.

Our post-sabbatarian society shows confusion about the source of light: some still calling it the Son of God, a minority calling it the sun god, and others calling it the sun. Like Wallace Stevens, Miller seems content with his indecision: "It is the belief and not the god that counts." And yet, we must wonder if anxiety lurks behind indecision. As Nathaniel Hawthorne said of Melville: "He can neither believe, nor be comfortable in his unbelief." ♦

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A Tudor Dynasty

Balanchine and the American Ballet Theater are no longer synonymous. **BY PIA CATTON**

Anthony Tudor and dancers, 1942

When a choreographer's centennial year rolls around, the public can count on a few sure things. There will be at least one celebratory video montage, plus one earnest, yet chummy panel discussion. A few rarely seen ballets will be performed throughout a year that will culminate in a blowout evening devoted to the choreographer's work.

All this was duly bestowed upon Antony Tudor (1908-1987) last year, but at American Ballet Theater, something else happened, too. In the process of learning Tudor's meticulously detailed, emotionally demanding ballets, the dancers seemed to embrace the difficult aesthetic. By all evidence, they "got" it. So much so that it's fair to say ABT now dances Anthony Tudor better than it dances George Balanchine.

Tudor is something of an unsung figure in the history of ballet in America. Even though the English-born choreographer spent the better part of his career on these shores, he did not gain the popular name recognition of Balanchine or Jerome Robbins. As a result, an all-Tudor program doesn't exactly spark a box-office stampede; to wit, ABT offered its all-Tudor blowout evening only at New York's City Center, but the company knew better than to take this show on the road.

ABT has a long history with Tudor. In 1940 the company (then known as Ballet Theater) brought him over from England to stage several of his works. He stayed on and would come to hold several posts within the company. He later taught at the Metropolitan Opera Ballet School, as well as at the Juilliard School.

His sensibility would help shape ABT, but his ballets are not easy. Tudor was arguably the first to introduce a psychological element into ballets. His characters aren't the stuff of classic ballets—the swans or girl ghosts (*Gisele*) who live to dance a prince to death. They are young women tormented by guilt and fascination with sex, such as Hagar in *Pillar of Fire* (1942). They are well-to-do folk who must give up their lovers for a marriage of convenience—and then suffer through a social occasion where all parties are present, as in *Jardin aux Lilas* (1936).

A Tudor ballet requires artistry from the dancers and patience from the audience. On any given night, one or both camps can be found wanting. The difficulty for the dancers is that the precision details serve as outlets for geysers of emotion. Every step must be performed with a sense of theater fueled by a psychological understanding of what the character is going through.

ABT principal Julie Kent described a good example from *Jardin aux Lilas* in a celebratory video montage: Caroline, the character who is giving up her lover for The Man She Must Marry (Tudor's character names tend to help the plot), often puts her hand to the side of her face. But the hand is at a specific, awkward angle. Imagine shaking hands with someone. Now draw your right hand back and place your right palm at your right cheek—with the fingers pointing forward and the thumb near your ear. It may not feel natural, but onstage, it says a lot.

On some level, though, that shouldn't be so exceptional. Dancers are professionals who should be able to express themselves in movement. True. But these ballets were made in a time when theatrical artistry held more sway than athleticism—and the audiences of the time rewarded that depth of emotion. More recent generations of ballet dancers are less like thespians and more like Olympians—stronger, faster, higher. Through greater strength and technique, their powerful bodies

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have upped the ante; today, the crowd expects to go wild for tricky turns and splashy moves. The thing is, there are no circus tricks in Tudor.

Which is what makes ABT's success with this choreographer all the more encouraging. Principal dancer Gillian Murphy is a dancer of supreme technique who can make the classic 32 fouettés (with doubles sprinkled in, thus making the crowd go wild) look like a cakewalk. And yet, when she dances *Pillar of Fire*, the audience is hushed into a sense of awe. She has come to own the role of Hagar, a repressed middle sister who takes herself to a house of ill repute and then finds redemption in a good man. Murphy plays it both achingly hot and "cool as the other side of the pillow."

The Tudor works give talented dancers room to explore what they can do onstage. Xiomara Reyes and Gennadi Saveliev made a deeply affecting pair in the farewell duet from Tudor's *Romeo and Juliet*, which is set to music by Frederick Delius. Kent and Kristi Boone both exhibited glamorous sorrow in *Jardin aux Lilas*. The young cast that danced *Continuo*, a ballet Tudor made in 1971 for his students, was promising.

Part of what helped is that ABT brought in some top-notch dancers who were specialists in these ballets. *Pillar of Fire* and *Continuo* were staged by Amanda McKerrow and John Gardner, a husband-and-wife team of Tudor experts and former ABT dancers. *Judgment of Paris* (1938) is a light, funny skit that casts the three muses as prostitutes dancing in a French café for a sauced boulevardier. It was staged by Diana Byer, a former Tudor student at Juilliard who now runs the tiny but noble New York Theater Ballet.

Dance is unusual in that, after a choreographer's death, the nuances of the work must be passed from dancer to dancer. The steps can be preserved on videotape, but the creator's intentions, imagery, and ideas are rarely written down. Like the book memorizers in *Fahrenheit 451*, dancers take pains to transfer their treasures over to those who understand the value. This time around, that transfer yielded splendid results. ♦

Liebling in Uniform

The Great Reporter meets the Good War.

BY EDWARD M. SHORT

Towards the end of his life, A.J. Liebling (1904-1963), the best of the *New Yorker* reporters, summed up his experience of war with characteristic incisiveness. "I know that it is socially acceptable to write about war as an unmitigated horror," he wrote, "but subjectively at least, it was not true, and you can feel its pull on men's memories at the maudlin reunions of war divisions. They mourn for their dead, but also for war."

World War II Writings
by A.J. Liebling
Library of America, 1,100 pp., $40

This shows something essential about Liebling: his readiness to trust experience, even when it confounded his suppositions—an indispensable attribute in any good reporter. He also saw a certain comedy in baffled supposition. In 1941 he recounted boarding a train for London:

> When I went down to my train the next day I was pleasurably impressed to find nearly all the seats in the first-class carriage occupied by private soldiers and aircraftsmen. The head porter of the hotel had sent a lad along half an hour ahead of time to get a place for me. I decided that the British social revolution, of which we had heard a good deal in America, had at last arrived. One minute before train time all the "other ranks" yielded their seats to officers and got out. They were batsmen who had been sent to hold the places. "Obviously," I thought to myself, "in this country it is unwise to jump to conclusions."

Earlier, he witnessed an exchange between two Scots—a scene, as he described it, straight out of a Waverly novel—but rather than jump to conclusions, he pondered the episode: "I went to bed . . . trying to figure whether they had framed me with some amateur theatricals. But it had all been on the level. The first fact one must accept about Britain is that all British literature, no matter how improbably it reads, is realistic. You meet its most outrageous models everywhere you turn." Here again Liebling was the consummate reporter, albeit with a twinkle in his eye.

The human aspect of war, not grand strategy, was his forte. Like Robert Graves, Liebling often treated war as though it were the stuff of light comedy. His description of an encounter in an apple orchard riddled with snipers is a good example.

> The Colonel who reassured me about the snipers was an Ozark type; he saw they couldn't have done much shooting before they got into the army, since they didn't know how to lead a moving target. "If you keep walking, they almost always shoot behind you," he told me. I looked around, and it was the most perambulatory headquarters . . . I had ever seen. . . . "We got some old Missouri squirrel-hunters in this outfit, and we are hunting the snipers down pretty good," the Colonel said. "But we could do better if we had dogs."

At the same time, Liebling never spared his reader the grislier aspects of war. In Tunisia, he witnessed the ministrations of a roadside field doctor.

> He had a tanned giant perched on the camp stool, a second lieutenant in the Corps France d'Afrique. The man's breasts were hanging off his chest in a kind of bloody ruff. "A bit of courage now, my son, will save you a great deal of trouble later on," the doctor said as he prepared to do something or other.

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I assumed, perhaps pessimistically, that he was going to hack off bits of flesh as you would trim the ragged edges of an ill-cut page. "Go easy, Doctor," the young man said. "I'm such a softie." The traffic jam started to move, so I don't know what the doctor did to him.

Liebling's masters were the great English journalists Daniel Defoe, William Hazlitt, and William Cobbett. He also admired George Borrow, author of the picaresque *Lavengro* and *The Romany Rye*, as well as many paeans to prizefighting. ("Let no one sneer at the bruisers of England," begins one section of *Lavengro*.) From these models he took away a respect for exuberance and intellectual honesty, as well as an approach to style that illustrated Swift's definition of good writing: "proper words in proper places."

The war writings collected in this Library of America edition—including *The Road Back to Paris* (1944), *Normandy Revisited* (1958), *Mollie and Other War Pieces* (1964), and many uncollected pieces—exhibit Liebling's strengths on nearly every page. Raymond Sokolov's lively biography, *Wayward Reporter: The Life of A.J. Liebling* (1980), makes a good companion to the collection.

Much of Liebling's war was spent in transit, though he was ringside at a few of the major bouts. In 1939 Harold Ross sent him to Paris, where he covered *la drôle de guerre*. After Paris fell in June 1940, he had no alternative but to return to New York. In July 1941, he flew to London on an RAF bomber and later wrote about an extraordinary Irish pilot—"Paddy of the RAF"—"who does everything exactly right . . . a fraction of a second before his opponent."

In December 1941, after returning to the United States on a Norwegian ship, Liebling wrote "Westbound Tanker," which Joseph Mitchell considered his best war piece. In 1942, he sailed back to England and reported on the Allied troops in London. In 1943, he accompanied U.S. fighter squadrons in Algeria and Tunisia. In April 1943 he traveled to Tripoli and in May he sailed from Casablanca to New York. In 1944, he returned to England and accompanied a B-26 bombing mission over France.

In that same year, he published "Notes from the Kidnap House," a three-part story on the press in occupied France, in which he dryly observed: "The treason of a writer is explicit, because he puts it in words"—something not all of our own correspondents sufficiently grasp. On D-Day he crossed the English Channel in a large landing craft transporting troops to Omaha Beach. In "Cross-Channel Trip" he recalled looking towards the stern and seeing "a tableau that was like a recruiting poster": guns blazing, Old Glory "brilliant in the sun," and the men of the beach battalion disembarking into the water "without a sign of flinching."

Liebling went ashore on June 9 and spent two months with American troops in Normandy and Brittany. By September he could write from Paris that "for the first time in my life and probably the last, I have lived for a week in a great city where everybody is happy." In December he returned to New York, where he took rooms in the Fifth Avenue Hotel and drafted "Mollie," perhaps his best-known war piece.

Before and after the war, Liebling wrote brilliantly about low life, the press, boxing, and his two favorite subjects, food and drink. In *Between Meals: An Appetite for Paris* (1959), he vividly described the year he spent at the Sorbonne after he was thrown out of Dartmouth for refusing to attend chapel. In one passage he recalled Yves Mirande, a *farceur* who was also one of the great gourmands.

A.J. Liebling, 1963

BETTMANN / CORBIS

In the restaurant on the Rue Saint-Augustin, M. Mirande would dazzle his juniors . . . by dispatching a lunch of raw Bayonne ham and fresh figs, a hot sausage in a crust, spindles of filleted pike in a rich rose *sauce Nantua*, a leg of lamb larded with anchovies, artichokes on a pedestal of *foie gras*, and four or five kinds of cheese, with a good bottle of Bordeaux and one of champagne, after which he would call for the Armangac and remind Madame to have ready for dinner the larks and the ortolans she had promised him, with a few *langoustes* and a turbot—and, of course, a fine *civet* made from the *marcassin*, or young wild boar that the lover of the leading lady in his current production had sent up from his estate in Sologne.

Liebling admired gourmands partly as the result of upbringing: His father, a successful furrier, took his family on frequent trips to Europe, where his insatiable son, familiar only with the beer gardens of New York, reveled in the gastronomic abundance of the old world. Yet Liebling also admired gourmands because they had something heroic about them. What ruined the old gargantuan appetites was a preoccupation with the liver, and for Liebling, "the liver was the seat of the Maginot mentality."

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Although of German Jewish ancestry—his Jewish father arrived in New York from Austria and later married a Jewish woman from San Francisco—Liebling was an unabashed Francophile who downplayed his Jewishness and abominated Germans. As a child he had been entrusted to the care of German governesses, all of whom, he later recalled, were "stupid, whining, loud, and forever trying to frighten me with stories of children who had been burned to a crisp or eaten by an ogre because they had disobeyed other *Fräuleins*."

In "Madame Hamel's Cows" about the Americans' capture of St. Lô in 1944, Liebling observed of the retreating enemy:

> During the last days of the battle, I had been heartened by the number of abandoned German bodies in the road; it showed that the survivors were moving backward a lot faster than they wanted, or they would have carried their dead with them. They were unlikable people and they had no business in that part of France anyway.

Germans were not the only nationals Liebling skewered. He was particularly withering about the Italian prisoners he encountered on the beach after D-Day. "They were fine, rugged specimens," he wrote, "as they should have been, because since the Italian surrender they had undoubtedly had plenty of exercise swinging pick-axes for the Todt organization." Disarmed by the Germans in Greece, they had been given the choice of either fighting with their Axis allies or doing labor service for them. "They had all chosen labor service. . . . They seemed to expect to be commended for this choice. . . . 'We wouldn't fight for Hitler,' they assured me. I thought that the point had already been pretty well proved. Now they were digging for us." Liebling's Francophilia had fully acquainted him with the stratagems of *amour-propre*.

When Liebling went to war he took his peacetime enthusiasms with him. There was his interest in cookery:

> Among troops actively engaged, a K ration beat nothing to eat, but it was a photo finish. These components were a round tin of alleged pork and egg, ground up together and worked to a consistency like the inside of a sick lobster's claw, and tasting like boardwalk cotton candy without any sugar in it.

Horseracing also showed up in his dispatches. At Auteuil he noticed: "Steeplechasing here has the same picaresque attraction that flat racing has in America—an identical atmosphere of engaging skullduggery motivated by avarice." Then there was his delight in women. Describing the liberation of Paris in 1944, Liebling recalled "hundreds of bicyclists" pedaling towards his jeep and among them "pretty girls, their hair dressed high on their heads." Like Ford Madox Ford, another fat man whom women found irresistible, Liebling attracted women by making no secret of how attractive he found them.

> *'Some people like to live in a good neighborhood. I like to live in a good age. I am a sucker for a happy ending—the villain kicked in the teeth, the stepchildren released from the dark basement, the hero in bed with the heroine.'*

> These girls show legs of a length and slimness and firmness and brownness never associated with French womanhood. Food restrictions and the amount of bicycling that is necessary in getting around a big city without any other means of transportation have endowed these girls with the best figures in the world, which they will doubtless be glad to trade in for three square meals, plentiful supplies of chocolate, and a seat in the family Citroën.

One reason why Liebling's marriage to Jean Stafford never went south was that she found the pedestal he put her on an agreeable perch. Robert Lowell never bought her fur coats. She also liked the foul-mouthed, hard-drinking, raffish company he kept.

Liebling also took to war his respect for good reporting, which he exhibited brilliantly in "Mollie," a piece about a legendary soldier killed in Morocco after taking 600 Italians prisoner. Mollie fascinated Liebling because he was Times Square gone to war, in much the same way as Evelyn Waugh's Basil Seal, the hero of *Put Out More Flags*, was Mayfair gone to war. Mollie also fascinated Liebling because he was a dreamer, a proletarian Jay Gatsby.

Liebling was a dreamer himself. He loved dive bars, boxing rings, and racetracks because they were the fastnesses of dreams, where he could cultivate his rakish ideal of the man about town. In these and other *louche* locales he pursued the regimen of excess that killed him at 59. (Gout was his constant companion.) Mollie was cut out of the same cloth. As one of his company described him, he treated the Army as though it were his own stage set:

> There will never be anybody in the division as well known as him. In the first place, you couldn't help noticing him on account of his clothes. He looked like a soldier out of some other army, always wearing them twenty-dollar green tailor-made officer's shirts and sometimes riding boots, with a French berrit with a long rooster feather that he got off another prisoner for a can of C ration. . . . He had the biggest blanket roll in the Ninth Division, with a wall tent inside it and some Arabian carpets and bronze lamps and a folding washstand and about five changes of uniform, none of them regulation, and he would always manage to get it on a truck when we moved. When he pitched his tent, it looked like a concession at Coney Island.

Mollie proved to Liebling how a soldier from his own stomping ground, a dime-store dreamer could help preserve the dreams of all free men. This was what gave him his special heroism. He was the common man of uncommon bravery rescuing civilization from Prussian militarism. In *Brideshead Revisited* Evelyn Waugh might have faulted Hooper for vul-

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garity and slackness but Liebling had nothing but praise for Mollie and his plebeian derring-do.

When it came to politics, Liebling did not go in for elaborate exegesis: "I think democracy a most precious thing, not because any state is perfect, but because it is perfectible." If American democracy passed Prohibition, it also passed the repeal of Prohibition. After Germany invaded Russia in 1941, Liebling found himself walking through Union Square, "where all the free-style catch-as-catch-can Marxist arguers hang out, and all the boys who two days earlier had been howling for Churchill's blood were now screaming for us to get right into the war. 'Well,' I thought, 'we are on the same side of a question for once, any way.'"

This was the extent of what Liebling called "my ideology."

Editors whose ideology compels them to oppose the Iraq war have no qualms running pieces designed to demoralize the home front. They will not see their defeatism in any of Liebling's pages. He was too intent on victory. As he wrote in *The Road Back to Paris*: "Some people like to live in a good neighborhood. I like to live in a good age. I am a sucker for a happy ending—the villain kicked in the teeth, the stepchildren released from the dark basement, the hero in bed with the heroine."

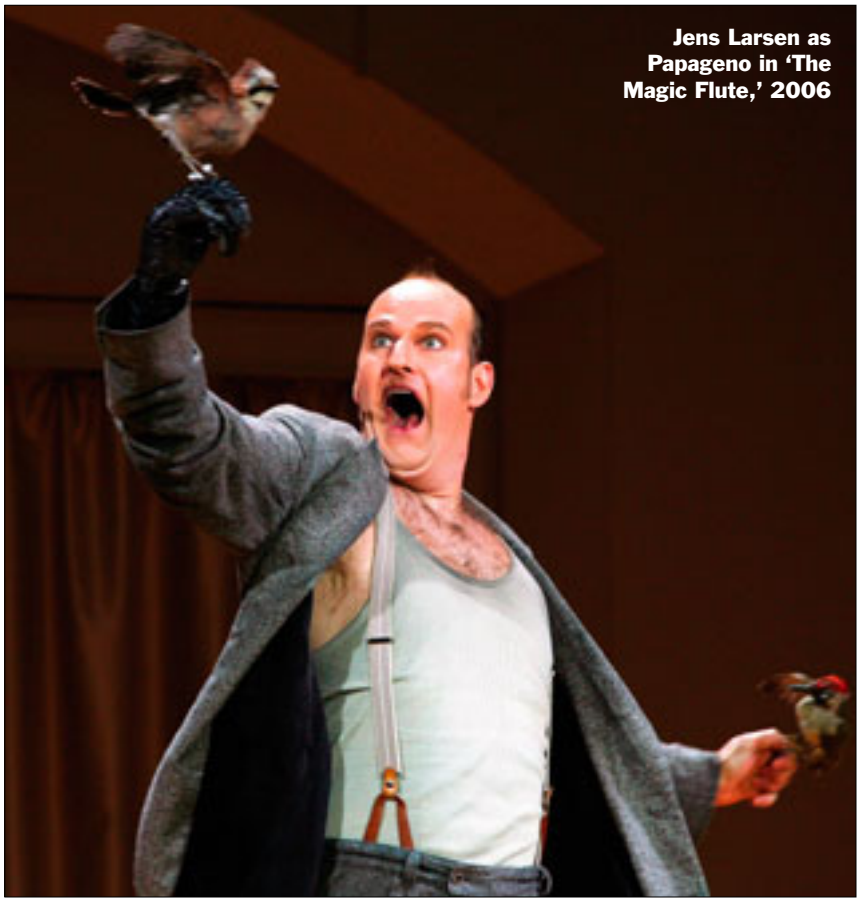
Thanks to the heroism of people like Mollie, Liebling got his happy ending. Here he is on the liberation of France a little over a month after D-Day.

> The Fourteenth of July apparently found everybody in the liberated zone happy. Tricolors that had not seen the light since the Pétain armistice fluttered over houses and draped window sills everywhere, usually along with homemade American flags and often with signs saying "*Vive l'Amérique*" or "*Merci à Nos Libérateurs*." . . . As one thick-waisted old farmer, an ex-cuirassier said, "An armored formation has cut up my best pasture, a promising heifer has gone up with a mine, and a bomb has removed most of the tiles from the roof of my house, but, *Monsieur*, I assure you, I was never so happy in my life." ♦

Amadeus on Stage

What Mozart's operas tell us about Mozart.

BY FRED BAUMANN



Jens Larsen as Papageno in 'The Magic Flute,' 2006

GERO BRELOER / EPA / CORBIS

So, what is a "companion," anyway? Less than a friend, more than a sidekick, something of a teacher, but good company through thick and thin, Mary Hunter's companion book to Mozart's operas makes good on its subtitle, especially for many of us who love the famous operas but don't know the early ones, or the *opera seria*, or much about the historical background or musical vocabulary from which they arose.

Mozart's Operas
A Companion
by Mary Hunter
Yale, 280 pp., $35

Hunter starts by showing us something of how things work, like a "da capo" aria, which displays two parts of varying sentiments that allow a more intense rendering in the repetition of the first. Similarly, when we know that the *cantabile*, or singing, style conveys sincerity and tenderness, we can deduce that, when Susanna deceives Figaro with a *cantabile* aria, she really still, sincerely, loves Figaro.

Perhaps her most useful chapter is on *opera seria*, an art form that is strong

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on pyrotechnical singing but seems stiff and undramatic. It helps to understand the convention (already fading in Mozart's day) of the castrato voice as heroic. More fundamentally we learn that the emotional power of *opera seria* isn't found in seeing action on stage but hearing its effects reflected in the feelings of the character.

Then there are the complex origins of the history of *Singspiel*, the German comic opera with both Viennese and North German roots, and its share in the 18th-century culture wars of emancipation of German literature and theater from French models. Her treatment of *The Magic Flute*, with its much-decried, interpreted, and over-interpreted libretto, is appropriately sensible. And when it comes to the great *opera buffas* like *Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Cosi Fan Tutte*, we get what we need, from the relation of Mozart's rather more anodyne but still somewhat risky opera to Beaumarchais's revolutionary play to the 19th century's unhappiness with the return of *Cosi*'s lovers to their original mates. (For every opera Hunter provides a plot summary and a commentary, which includes a history of its composition and first performance.)

I did miss, though, any reflection on the oddity of the enlightened Mozart taking on an old Jesuit tale of divine punishment in *Don Giovanni*. It matters that each of the late Mozart operas is about revenge, and only in one of them, *Don Giovanni*, does it seem, at least on the surface, to be approved.

If Hunter does have a tendency in interpretation, it is found in her chapter on "Mozart's Social World." This mostly concerns the comic operas, where you find lower-class characters and something like social commentary. She claims that "the social stratification in Mozart's comic operas is represented as mostly clear, absolutely immutable, and generally desirable."

While nobles don't always behave nobly, the lower-class characters, even the heroes and heroines like Figaro and Susanna, are, if female, clever and sexy and, if male, dopey and clumsy. Both "are largely absolved of moral responsibility." Other than Figaro and Susanna they don't even get to have "particularly deep feeling." Hunter emphasizes that this stratification didn't reflect the realities of a time in which what "we today would call the middle classes" were increasingly in evidence. This omission, in turn, she attributes to the desire to keep the upper-class audience assured that, in the composer's view, "the system was not fundamentally unjust."

This leads Hunter to the occasional forced judgment about particular musical moments, and to a general obscuring of what may be going on in Mozart's treatment of society and politics. Thus Hunter repeatedly cites Figaro's aria "Aprite po' quegli occhi" as a classic piece of buffoonery. Such arias "almost always end with the character seeming to lose control . . . in a case study of incoherence." For her, the aria descends into confusion and spluttering; Figaro "aspires to the character of nobility but fails to achieve it." She finds a typical deflection of the audience's sympathies away from the lower-class characters, who are "making accusations rather than describing the character's own situation or feelings." Figaro comes off badly against Susanna, as "relatively ineffective within the plot." Again, despite being "the cleverest of the lot," he remains typical of the bumbling male servant because he "is not the one who comes up with the successful plot to thwart the Count, and he is in the end duped by his own betrothed."

Well, Figaro has indeed been fooled into thinking that his fiancée Susanna is going to betray him with the Count, and expresses his jealousy in a general denunciation of women. But far from descending into sputtering incoherence, he describes his own situation with considerable wit. Women are charming foxes, malign doves, benign bears; i.e., you can't help loving them but you can't trust them. Nor do I see why ending the aria by saying that there's more to say that he won't go into must be read as incoherence. The capacity to cut off a rant is usually a sign of some vestige of control.

Further, the aria may deflect Hunter's sympathy, but I very much doubt that I am alone in saying that it has always enlisted mine, precisely because it does exactly what Hunter says it doesn't—namely, describe the character's own feelings. Yes, Figaro is hurt and does feel foolish; but to lump this aria in, say, with Dr. Bartolo's fatuous first act paean to vengeance, which really *does* fit Hunter's description of pompous buffoonery, is to miss crucial matters of tone badly. Figaro is not trying to be noble and failing; he is being Figaro, angry, self-aware, self-lacerating, and, as he tells Marcellina, devastated ("son morto"). And while Susanna does deceive him, Hunter does not mention that, when Figaro in fact recognizes his fiancée dressed in the Countess's clothing, he repays the trick by pretending to make love to the "Countess," evoking a very similar jealousy, slaps included, from Susanna.

Hunter's sociological earnestness here begins to obscure important qualities of the great buffa operas. The point isn't that Susanna is smarter than Figaro or that male servants must bumble to satisfy aristocratic audiences. Mozart initially accepts the conventions of the genre, but he uses them like a ladder, to get above them. In the same way that the allegorical reading of male superiority in *The Magic Flute* is transcended in the equality of the union of Tamino and Pamina (as acted out ritually in the trials of fire and water) so, too, the set-piece understanding of noble people with high feelings and low people with low ones is used and abandoned in *Figaro*.

There is a new ideal to be found in the opera, reflected both in the overtly noble (but highly flawed) reconciliation of Count and Countess, and in the overtly lower-class (and perhaps, in a deeper way, genuinely noble) reconciliation of Figaro and Susanna. It is the same humanist ideal that is found in *Cosi Fan Tutte* and in *The Magic Flute*, however different its manifestations. Posturing, *amour propre*, and vengefulness are overcome while love and knowledge, both of self and the other, turn out to be compatible.

Except here, Professor Hunter, a recipient of the Kinkeldey Prize, named in honor of a great scholar who exemplified in his deeds the kind of humanity Mozart celebrates, proves a very good companion indeed. ♦

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Man of Letters

John Updike, 1932-2009. **BY CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL**

Part of the achievement of John Updike, who died on January 27, was that he became the preeminent all-around man of letters in our cutthroat literary culture without ever losing his reputation as a generous and gentle person. He did so while being derided by half the country as an unadventurous bourgeois, and distrusted by the other half as a risqué writer of dirty books.

Updike did not cultivate eccentricity, but two things about him were, for his era, idiosyncratic. The first was that he felt at home in the unsophisticated center of American life. He described cardboard Santa Clauses in drugstore windows, piles of pink receipts in garage offices, and the way the air smells at a high school football game. He was also at home in America's sophisticated, mostly private, precincts—its libraries and art galleries. He had a better understanding than most writers of how dependent the latter is on the former. He never condescended to America, nor did his time at Harvard or at art school in England make him feel "alienated" from it. Of the public school he attended in Shillington, Pennsylvania, he wrote, "I could not understand how anyone could rebel against a system so clearly benign."

Updike's willingness to take the world as he found it drove his generation's more ostentatiously ideological novelists up the wall. Gore Vidal called him a "dupe." Norman Mailer thought Updike had no sense of the drama that surrounded him. This only shows Mailer's stunted sense of the dramatic, for the drowning in *Rabbit, Run* may be the most horrifying scene in 20th-century American fiction. But it is true that Updike's stories and novels revolve more around changes in state of mind than around changes in state. He deals in epiphany, not peripeteia.

It takes a tremendously agile and well-stocked mind to make such writing interesting. Updike had one. His second great idiosyncrasy was his way of viewing the world. He is not America's greatest writer but, among American writers, he is surely the greatest describer. Sometimes this was just a matter of having a good eye or ear. Looking into a dentist's rinsing bowl he would remark "the little comet-tail-shaped smear of rust this miniature Charybdis had worn down the section of the vortex where its momentum expires" (*The Centaur*). He noticed "thermoses chuckling in the straw hampers" and the way gravel driveways go *unch*, *unch* under your feet ("When Everyone Was Pregnant").

And sometimes his observations of small, finite things invite us to meditate on every thing. The randy clergyman, sneaking up to a window after midnight to spy on his mistress, hears "if not quite voices, then the faint rubbed spot on the surface of silence that indicates where voices have been erased" (*A Month of Sundays*). A suburban father notices his "children dispersed into the neighborhood on the same mysterious tide that on other days packed their back yard with unfamiliar urchins" ("Your Lover Just Called").

This is writerly power. The novelist who possesses it can apply it to just about anything. And Updike did. In the late 1960s his writing took a turn for the sexual. *Couples*, a mostly excellent novel about marital rupture in a Massachusetts town, was the tocsin that would send whole regiments of anthropomorphized vaginas and breasts marching across the terrain of his work. As a subject, sex must have seemed the same to Updike as the inventory in a Pennsylvania five-and-dime store—they can be both beautiful and ridiculous at the same time—but this is the quirk of his writing that will endure least well.

Updike was a witty and underrated light-verse poet. The only reason his reputation as a poet is not higher is that, as with Kingsley Amis, it strains critics' credulity (or generosity) to believe that a good novelist can also be a good poet. Updike was also a natural art critic. His gift was for bringing a painting or drawing to life by making it a metaphor for the world outside the museum, as when he wrote that Bruegel's monsters have, aside from their bodily grotesqueries, "rueful, semi-aggressive expressions like those of the man next door."

The best thing about John Updike was that he was uncowed by the bullying forces of modernity that would have us believe that writing is not as necessary to culture as it once was. He continued to believe that—no matter how entertaining the movies—the life of reading and writing is ultimately the only way into culture. In the beautiful ending to his story "The Deacon," the eponymous churchman, closing up the building on a stormy night, reflects that the church

> is indeed a preparation for death—an emptiness where many others have been, which is what death will be. It is good to be at home here. . . . The storm seizes the church by its steeple and shakes, but the walls were built, sawed and nailed, with devotion, and withstand. The others are very late, they will not be coming; Miles is not displeased, he is pleased. He has done his part. He has kept the faith. He turns off the lights. He locks the door. ♦

Christopher Caldwell is a senior editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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Violence Hurts

Clint Eastwood knows how to 'tut-tut while he rat-a-tat-tats.' **BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

The genius of Clint Eastwood's career is that he has figured out how to have it every which way but loose when it comes to the depiction of violence on the screen, as his new film, *Gran Torino*, demonstrates brilliantly. We thrill as Eastwood, almost an octogenarian, deservedly whales the tar out of a vicious teenage boy even as we are made to furrow our brow and share in the deep pain of his character, so haunted by his combat experience in Korea that he long ago hid away the Silver Star he won for the hand-to-hand killing of an enemy soldier.

Gran Torino
Directed by Clint Eastwood

This hypocritical two-facedness about cinematic violence was very much a feature of the cultural and historical moment when Eastwood first became a star—a time in the late 1960s during which the fashionable pacifism spawned by the Vietnam war existed side by side with the new visceral excitement provided by movies no longer bound to the restrictions of a Production Code and thereby free to portray sex and violence with an entirely novel graphic realism. So, on the one hand, you had protestations about the evils of violence and on the other you had audiences flocking to see Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway turned into Swiss cheese at the end of *Bonnie and Clyde*.

One classic line of dialogue from the amazingly weird *Billy Jack*, the enormous box-office hit of 1971 about an alliance between a bunch of hippies and a saintly Native American zen master just back from Vietnam who must deal with a bunch of land-grabbing rednecks, summed up the New Hollywood perspective. "He was a war hero who hated the war," someone says about Billy Jack—a pacifist, but one who knew how to kick five yahoos in the teeth for disrespecting the flower children. And so is Walt Kowalski of *Gran Torino*. The only difference is that he fought in his war 56 years ago.

Eastwood has spent his career playing the Billy Jack card. And what an astonishing career it has been—a movie star for five decades, a director for four decades, winner of a Best Director Oscar at the age of 62 for a movie that also won best picture (*Unforgiven*), repeating that same double feat at the age of 74 (*Million Dollar Baby*). In the 1970s, his great rival was Burt Reynolds; now, Burt Reynolds is God knows where while Eastwood has become the most respected elder statesman in Hollywood history. And not only that: *Gran Torino* is well on its way to becoming one of the decade's surprise blockbusters. It is the most financially successful film of his career as actor and director. He is 79.

Violence made Clint Eastwood a star and violence kept him a star. He was the harbinger of the new era in the bloody Italian-made "spaghetti westerns" of the 1960s that turned him into an international sensation. Essaying the part of a vigilante cop in 1971's *Dirty Harry* made him an icon. Choosing a script about a psychotic female stalker called *Play Misty for Me* in 1971 turned him into a director. Playing a bare-knuckled street fighter for laughs in 1978's *Every Which Way But Loose* turned him into the heir to John Wayne, who alternated between westerns and lighter fare late in his career. *Unforgiven* was by far the bloodiest movie ever to win Best Picture until *The Departed* superseded it a couple of years ago. *Million Dollar Baby* featured women boxers punching each other's lights out in close up.

So why didn't Eastwood become the bête noire of the influential crowd that claims pop culture violence has degraded our culture and contributed to a deadening of our moral sense? Because, time and again, he has paid that crowd obeisance. In his films, he is careful to tut-tut while he rat-a-tat-tats. If the disastrous national housing market were rewarded a nickel for every review written of an Eastwood movie since the mid-1970s that claimed the film under review was, in fact, a meditation on the dangers of violence and an implicit self-criticism on Eastwood's part, the credit crunch would end instantly.

It was said of *The Outlaw Josey Wales*, the first Western he directed himself. It was said of *Sudden Impact*, the Dirty Harry sequel with the famous "go ahead, make my day" scene. It was said of *Tightrope*, a thriller in which he, "a cop on the edge," went after a serial killer. *Unforgiven* features a scene in which Eastwood's character talks about how awful it is to kill a man before he goes and kills several—but in the process spares a younger man from following in his path, a subplot duplicated almost identically in *Gran Torino*. His war movie *Flags of Our Fathers* played off the patriotism of the heroic triumph at Iwo Jima while, in effect, saying that there is no such thing as heroism in war.

Though Eastwood is famously not a Hollywood liberal, he has, wittingly or unwittingly, figured out the perfect way to become the ultimate Hollywood hero: Shoot first, preferably with a machine gun, and ask supposedly probing moral questions later. As a director, he's very uneven. As an actor, he can best be described as the Olivier of squinting. But as a cinematic spin doctor, no one has ever come close. ♦

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, *is* THE WEEKLY STANDARD*'s movie critic.*

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"President Barack Obama was welcoming House and Senate leaders from both parties to the White House for drinks Wednesday night as he continues to lobby lawmakers to pass his economic recovery bill despite stiff GOP opposition." —Associated Press, *January 29, 2009*

Parody

Tomorrow: *The same.*
Details, Page **B8**

The Washing

Next-to-Last Year, No. 122 DC MD VA Tuesday, February 3, 2

Police Shut Down Bipartisan Naval Observatory Reception

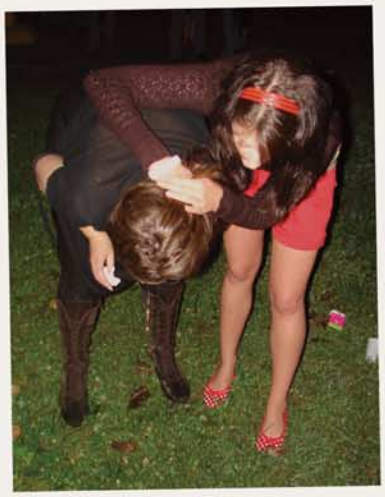
Neighbors Complain; Biden-Dodd Declared Beer Pong Champs

By Paul Kane
Washington Post Staff Writer

Inspired by President Barack Obama's desire for bipartisan cooperation, Vice President Joe Biden decided he too would host a reception for Republican and Democratic congressional leaders at his Naval Observatory residence. The plan, according to aides, was for the get-together to be even more casual than the White House event, starting at 6 p.m. last night, with drinks and light hors d'oeuvres. Eight hours later, emerging from District police headquarters, the vice president explained how it devolved:

"All I wanted was to put my spin on things, to let them know I'm a party guy," said Mr. Biden, who was not invited to the Obama cocktail reception. "That's when I decided on the frozen margarita machine, the nacho fountain, the pineapple vodka dispenser, Red Bull dispenser, Jägermeister dispenser, kegerator, and those women who go around offering shot specials."

Senator Chris Dodd (D-Conn.), who served as party co-chair, admits the overall result might have been slightly over the top. "I told Joe this party could define his vice presidency. It can make you the most popular guy on Massachusetts Avenue. That's when I suggested beer pong."



Two congressional staffers depart the VP residence after funneling beer with Senator Frank Lautenberg.

While President Obama's muted gathering involved 11 Democrats and 11 Republicans, the Biden event began with some 40 guests but quickly grew to include roughly half the members of the House and almost all the members of the Senate, not to mention former President Bill Clinton. Despite the vast grounds surrounding the vice presidential residence, neighbors in this tony section of the District started complaining about the noise level around midnight. By the time D.C. Metro police arrived at the scene, members of Congress were loitering in the streets and violating open-container laws. The front entrance of the Finnish embassy was strewn with lawn furniture. One officer reported seeing a donkey trotting down 34th Street.

When police knocked on Mr. Biden's door, Mr. Clinton answered, saying "they had to be 21 to drink, but only 18 to

See STIMULUS, *A6, Col.1*

New Digital TV Bill Includes Switch From Beta to VHS

the weekly Standard
February 9, 2009

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